

1814

THE
SACRED MIRROR;

OR,
COMPENDIOUS VIEW

OF
SCRIPTURE HISTORY.

CONTAINING
A FAITHFUL NARRATION

OF
ALL THE PRINCIPAL EVENTS

RECORDED IN
THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS,

FROM THE
CREATION OF THE WORLD TO THE DEATH OF ST. PAUL.

WITH
A CONTINUATION,

*From that Period to the final Destruction of Jerusalem by the
Romans.*

DESIGNED FOR THE MENTAL IMPROVEMENT OF YOUTH, AND
PARTICULARLY ADAPTED TO THE USE OF SCHOOLS.

17
1320

By the Rev. THOMAS SMITH,

AUTHOR OF THE UNIVERSAL ATLAS, &c. &c.

First American Edition: to which is added a copious Index, not in the
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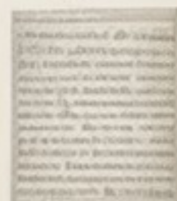
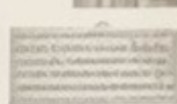
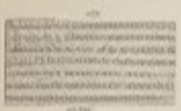
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W. H. Murray
PREFACE.

1812



AT a period marked by bold innovation, and tinged with a spirit of infidelity, it is certainly incumbent on every member of, or well wisher to the church of God, to make a vigorous exertion for the promulgation of that Gospel on which the Christian Religion is happily founded, and which demands our utmost reverence, as the only true guide to eternal life.

Impressed with this idea, and anxious to render an important service to the *rising generation*, whose tender minds, and expanding faculties, require the most delicate and unremitting attention, to preserve them from the contagion of vice, I have endeavoured to allure them to the study of the Scriptures, by a brief but connected view of the Sacred History ; which, I trust, may not only excite their curiosity, but enlighten their understandings, and influence their conduct. It is generally acknowledged that “ example strikes where precept fails,” and it is possible that, in perusing the following sheets, my young readers may verify the asser-

tion ; their hearts may probably be interested in the fate of Israel, and their unfeigned gratitude may either lead them to, or establish them in the worship of Israel's God.

As I have endeavoured to render my little history perspicuous and entertaining, by dividing it into distinct epochs, or periods of time, and preserving the thread of my narration unbroken, so I have been careful to give the dates of important occurrences, and have taken every opportunity of obviating such apparent contradictions as are sometimes brought forward by profligate and unthinking Atheists, to invalidate the truth of divine revelation.

The chapter which is designed to form a connecting link between the histories of the Old and New Testaments, and that which carries on the narration from the death of St. Paul to the awful accomplishment of our Saviour's predictions, in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, have been carefully compiled from Josephus, Dr. Prideaux, the English Universal History, and other works of established celebrity ; and will, I humbly hope, be found of real utility.

Conscious of the necessity of insisting upon the fundamentals of Christianity in a work of this nature, I have frequently endeavoured to impress my readers with suitable ideas of the Holy Trinity, the divinity of Jesus

Christ, and the infallible miracles by which our holy faith was first planted in the world ; and I earnestly pray that the Spirit of God may so enlighten their understandings that they may not only read, but mark, learn, and inwardly digest those objects of eternal moment.

Far from wishing to depreciate the labours of my able predecessors, who have written upon the *basis* of the following work, I cheerfully affirm, that they have deserved the sweet remuneration of public applause ; and I sincerely hope that future generations will rise up and call them blessed. But as some of their valuable works are too expensive for the generality of pupils in small academies, and others are rendered uninviting by being thrown into the form of a catechism, I have presumed to offer a little work on a different plan, which, from its compressed size, may be purchased by all ranks ; and which, it is hoped, may prove equally acceptable to youth, and to persons of maturer age, who wish for a perspicuous and uninterrupted view of the history of the Bible, and the final catastrophe of the Jewish metropolis.

Should it be objected that I have passed over most of the Jewish ceremonies, together with the lives and transactions of many prophets and pious men, in silence, I beg leave to remind my readers, that this omission was indispensably necessary, to avoid frequent digres-

sions ; and must not be imputed to carelessness or inattention.

As my only designs in compiling the " Sacred Mirror," are to fortify our youth against the growing errors of scepticism ; to show them, as in a glass, the portraits of good and wicked men ; to bring them into an intimate acquaintance with the lively oracles of truth ; and to allure them insensibly to the practice of virtue, I certainly hope that it will be perused with impartiality, and judged with candor. The known generosity of a British public, and the general character of our learned and justly esteemed Reviewers, encourages me in this expectation : I have, therefore, only to submit my labours to their examination, and to pray that the Father of Lights may crown them with his holy benediction.

THOMAS SMITH.

April 7th, 1803.

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THE

SACRED MIRROR.

CHAPTER I.

From the Creation to the Deluge.

THE first idea given, by the inspired historian, respecting our habitable globe, is that of a rude chaos. "The earth," says he, "was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the great deep." But, by the operation of the Spirit of God, which is expressly said to have moved upon the face of the waters, this confused mass was gradually separated, harmonized, and wrought into that beautiful variety of appearance which, from the earliest ages to the present period, has filled the breast of every pious individual with sentiments of mingled gratitude, wonder, and admiration.

The Adorable Being, who, in the Old Testament, is designated by the sacred epithets GOD, JEHOVAH, and the great I AM, but who, in later ages, has revealed himself more fully in the person of his *coequal* and *co-eternal* son JESUS CHRIST, first commanded the light to shine out of darkness, and, by his eternal fiat, produced a glorious day; not merely as introductory to his other

great works, or as a symbol of his own purity, but as typical of that radiance which, in the fulness of time, should arise upon the sons of men, and disperse the dark clouds of error and superstition.

Subsequent to this effect of creative power, the firmament, or lower heaven, was expanded to divide the upper from the lower waters ; the floods unanimously rushed into their appointed bed, and received the appellation of *seas* ; and the dry land (now distinguished by the name of earth,) was suddenly crowned with a verdant mantle, enriched with innumerable trees and shrubs, and embroidered with flowers of every tint and fragrance. The beauteous canopy of heaven was, also, spangled with myriads of stars ; and the sun and moon, those greater luminaries, were so disposed as to enlighten the newly created world, to divide the revolving seasons, and to form a perpetual distinction between day and night.

The waters were next replenished with an abundant variety of fish, and aquatic animals ; the birds of the air, starting into existence, hailed, with mellifluous songs, their Maker's goodness ; and the teeming earth brought forth abundantly her appropriate tribes. Lastly, to complete his great design, and eclipse the glory of all his preceding works, God created man in his own image, out of the dust of the ground, and infused into his nostrils the breath of immortality, in consequence of which Moses asserts that " man became a living soul." This favourite of the Deity was immediately invested with unlimited authority over every other created being and substance, and a suitable companion was formed for himself out of his own side, wherefore he gave her the appellation of woman, saying, " this is now bone of my bone,

and flesh of my flesh : she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man."

Thus, by the miraculous operation of the Holy Trinity* were the heavens and the earth created, in the space of six days, when such harmony pervaded each constituent part, and such exquisite beauty glowed upon the universal face of nature, that the Omnipotent Architect pronounced it very good, and† all the morning stars sang together. On the seventh day God rested from all his works, and instituted that sabbath which was ever afterward kept holy by the true worshippers.

Our first progenitors, Adam and Eve, were now placed in the garden of Eden, with instructions to dress and keep it, and with full permission to eat of all the fruits with which it abounded, except of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, from which they were commanded to abstain, on penalty of inevitable death. The Deity himself vouchsafed to honor this delightful abode with his immediate presence ; the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field, were here brought to receive their respective names from their highly favoured master ; and the objects of divine love were equally happy in their native innocence, and their total ignorance of evil.

This felicity, however, was soon interrupted and effectually destroyed by Satan ; who, under the form of a

* As we have already observed, that God created the heavens and the earth, and that the SPIRIT OF GOD moved upon the face of the waters, it is only necessary to remind our readers, in this place, that the WORD (Jesus Christ) was in the beginning with God ; that all things were made by him, and that without him was not any thing made that was made. See the gospel of St. John, chap. i. verses 2, 3.

† See Job, chap. xxxviii. verse 7.

serpent, persuaded Eve to violate her Creator's injunction respecting the forbidden fruit, and to forfeit her title to immortality in the vain hope of obtaining a superior degree of knowledge. "When the woman," says Moses, "saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat. By this act of disobedience, the dispensation of innocence was annihilated; virtue forsook the human bosom; and man, together with his unborn posterity, became obnoxious to the wrath and punishment of an offended God.

B. C. The eyes of our deluded progenitors were now
4004. opened to a humiliating sense of their depravity; the consciousness of their nakedness overwhelmed them with confusion; and instead of presenting themselves as formerly, before the Object of their adoration, they retired, to make themselves aprons of fig leaves, and to elude the anger of their Maker by concealment. This project, however, was of no avail; for they were immediately alarmed by the voice of the Deity, and called forth to answer for their transgression. In this exigence Adam attempted to extenuate his fault by charging his wife with the first breach of the commandment, and Eve, with greater justice, accused the serpent as the cause of her misfortune, but at the same time acknowledged her transgression. "The serpent," said she "beguiled me and I did eat." Hereupon the Almighty proceeded to pass judgment upon the offenders, of whom the serpent was doomed to endure the heaviest curse among beasts, to go upon his belly, to subsist upon dust, and to maintain a perpetual enmity with the seed

of the woman,* till the latter should eventually prove victorious ; the woman was condemned to bring forth her helpless progeny in pain and sorrow ; and Adam was sentenced to a life of toil and inquietude, in consequence of a curse which was imposed on the ground for his sake, God having declared that, on account of his disobedience, the earth should henceforth produce thorns and thistles, that in toil and sorrow he should eat the herb of the field, and that his body should finally return to the dust whence it was originally taken. After these awful declarations, the Creator graciously vouchsafed to clothe the unhappy pair with skins, and compelled them to quit the blissful abode of Paradise, lest, by rashly eating of the fruit of the tree of life, they might elude the stroke of death, and entail upon themselves *eternal* sorrows and infirmities. To obviate the possibility of such a circumstance, Adam was driven out, together with his fallen companion, to till the ground from whence he had been taken ; and a cherubim was placed at the eastern extremity of Eden, with a flaming sword, that turned every way, to guard the tree of life.

To what part of the globe our first parents removed after their expulsion from Paradise; it is impossible to determine : but it is highly probable that Eve brought forth her firstborn, Cain, in the first year of the world, and her second, whom she named Abel, the year fol-

* By this declaration, “ I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel,” the redemption of mankind was clearly predicted to be accomplished by JESUS CHRIST, who in due time was born of a woman, and who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. See Galatians iv. 4, and 1 John iii. 8.

lowing. These persons, as they advanced to years of maturity, selected employments of a different nature ; the elder applying himself to the labours of tillage, and the younger undertaking the care of the flocks : their dispositions also were diametrically opposite ; for Cain was gloomy, revengeful, and avaricious ; Abel ingenuous and truly pious.

The two brothers, in process of time, brought their respective offerings to the Almighty, but with very different success ; for whilst the oblation of Abel, consisting of the finest* lambs of his flock, was graciously accepted, the fruits of the earth, as offered by Cain, were totally disregarded. This circumstance wrought so powerfully on the mind of the firstborn that his countenance is said to have fallen, and his heart was dilated with wrath. God, however, condescended to expostulate upon the impropriety of this behaviour, and demanded what reason he could adduce in his own justifi-

* It is highly probable that sacrifices were first instituted by the Almighty in the garden of Eden, immediately upon the fall of our progenitors : for as the Deity then vouchsafed to *promise* a *Saviour*, who, in the fulness of time should redeem his people from their sins, we may reasonably suppose that he also instituted those *oblations for sin* which were regularly offered in succeeding ages, till the great atonement made by the High Priest of our profession upon Mount Calvary.

I am also inclined to believe that God clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of those beasts which were then sacrificed, to show the necessity of believers being clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which himself, in the New Testament, compares to a wedding garment ; and of which St. Paul energetically speaks, in his Epistle to the Philippians, chap. iii. ver. 9.

cation, since if he acted justly he would assuredly be accepted, and he could blame none but himself for the consequence of his own misconduct. The Deity also reminded him that he ought not to be incensed against Abel, who instead of attempting to injure or supplant him, would always pay him such respect as was due to an elder brother. "Unto thee," says the Divine speaker, "shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Cain, however, was so far from profiting by his Maker's admonition, that he resolved to murder his brother with the first convenient opportunity, and actually perpetrated the crime of fratricide whilst conversing with Abel in the fields.

B. C. The assassin having thus gratified his revenge,
3875. and being questioned by the Deity respecting his brother, endeavoured to evade a confession of his crime, by asserting that he knew not what was become of him, and churlishly asking, If he was his brother's keeper. But he was soon convinced of the futility of this attempt, and his guilty soul was appalled, not only with a full discovery of his transgression, but with a sentence that doomed him to perpetual inquietude, remorse, and infamy. "Now," saith God, "art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand. When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength ; but a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth." This denunciation, though in reality milder than could have been expected, was deemed insupportable by the criminal, who in the agony of grief exclaimed, "My punishment is greater than I can bear ; for thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth : and from thy face shall I be hid, and

I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth, and it shall come to pass that every* one that findeth me shall slay me." However, to obviate this dread of his fellow mortals, God declared that a sevenfold vengeance should fall upon any individual who attacked his life, and at the same time set a peculiar† mark upon him, as a protection against such a circumstance. Hereupon Cain quitted the place of his nativity, and migrated into the land of Nod, where he founded a city which he called, after the name of his son, Enoch.

B. C. Shortly after this occurrence another son was
3874. born, to console our first parents for the loss of

* As the enemies of revelation, and of our holy religion, eagerly embrace every opportunity of pointing out an *apparent contradiction* in the sacred writings, it seems necessary to observe in this place, that, though Moses has only given the histories of Cain and Abel subsequent to the expulsion of our progenitors from Eden, and previously to the birth of Seth, yet, as a rapid increase of population was naturally attached to the lives of the antediluvians, who began to have children as early, and to leave off as late, in proportion, as men do now, and as many generations which are *successive* with us, were *contemporary* before the flood, the number of persons living, at once, upon the earth, must certainly have answered any defect that might rise from other circumstances. So that, by a moderate computation on these principles, it will appear, that there was a considerable number of people in the world at the time of Abel's assassination.

† Many persons have supposed, from this portion of sacred history, that Cain's complexion was changed to a hue congenial to the nature of his crime ; and have therefore regarded him as the progenitor of the blacks : but as only one family, viz. that of Noah, was preserved from the deluge, this opinion seems ill founded. Various other conjectures have been formed on the subject, but they are all unworthy of notice.

their beloved Abel, wherefore Eve called his name Seth, or the *appointed*, “for,” said she, “God hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel whom Cain slew.”

The inspired historian confining himself chiefly to the line of Seth, from whom Noah was descended, relates but few particulars respecting the posterity of Cain, except that some of them were the inventors of mechanical arts and musical instruments. Josephus, however, and other writers of great respectability have asserted that they were a reprobate and licentious people, totally regardless of their Creator, and wholly addicted to the gratification of their own impure passions, on which account they were designated, in Holy Writ, by the epithets of *men*, and *daughters of men*, while the pious descendants of Seth were distinguished with the honorary appellation of *the sons of God*.

Of Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, and Jared, the progeny of Seth, Moses has taken no farther notice than to record their respective births and ages : but Enoch, the son of Jared, appears to have been a person of such exemplary piety, that he is emphatically said to have walked with God, and, after a well spent life of three hundred and sixty five years, he was translated to Heaven, without experiencing the bitter pangs of death. This illustrious character seems to have been blessed with several children, of whom Methuselah, the eldest, attained to the age of nine hundred and sixty nine years.

B C. Adam, having seen a numerous progeny issue
3074. from his own loins, was at length obliged to bow before “the king of terrors,” whom himself had introduced upon the earth by disobedience ; and, he accordingly, yielded up his soul into the hands of his Creator, after a life of nine hundred and thirty years. Various

conjectures have been formed respecting the place of his sepulture, though none of them can be established, for want of scriptural authority. Thus, St. Jerome asserts, that his remains were deposited in the cave of Machpelah ; the oriental christians say that he was embalmed by four of his descendants, and buried in a cave, on the summit of a mountain, which was afterward called the cave of Al Konuz ; and most of the primitive fathers suppose him to have been interred near that part of Mount Calvary where Jesus Christ, the *second Adam*, made, by his voluntary offering of himself, a full, perfect, and sufficient oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the world.

Religion seems to have been publicly and zealously maintained for some generations in the family of Seth ; but, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and were, in all probability, straitened for want of room, an unfortunate junction took place between the righteous seed of this patriarch and the posterity of Cain, and matrimonial alliances ensued, which gradually estranged the hearts of the true worshippers from the performance of their duty, and eventually brought in a spirit of licentiousness, which provoked the indignation of the Most High, and occasioned the destruction of the old world by a tremendous deluge. “ The sons of God,” says Moses, “ saw the daughters of men that they were fair ; and they took them wives of all which they chose.” From these unfortunate marriages issued a generation which seems to have been equally famous for their extraordinary stature and impiety, these were called *giants*, and their descendants, who may be reasonably supposed to have followed the wicked and tyrannical conduct of their fathers, are distinguished by the epithets *mighty men* and *men of renown*.

In this posture of affairs, while vice and profligacy were daily gaining ground, and every religious duty was rapidly sinking into neglect, the Almighty determined to chastise mankind for their unrighteousness ; but he graciously allotted them one hundred and twenty years for repentance, mercifully observing, that they were but flesh. As, however, they still continued incorrigible, and the friendly admonitions of * Noah were totally disregarded, God is emphatically said to have repented of the formation of such impenitent creatures, and to have decreed their destruction, together with that of the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air. The Divine Justice, however, was sweetly tempered with mercy, and a reservation was made, by which the earth might be replenished when the threatened deluge should subside.

B. C. At the expiration of the hundred and twenty
2348. years which God had allotted for the probation of rebellious mortals, Noah was commanded to enter the ark, with his wife, his sons and his daughters in law, taking with him all kinds of beasts, birds and reptiles, by pairs and by sevens, according to their respective natures, and in compliance with the Divine injunction ; while the residue of mankind treated the threatenings of their Maker with contempt, and continued in a state of careless security, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that the flood came and destroyed them all ; even to that memorable day

* Amidst this general corruption of morals, Noah retained his integrity, and persevered in the worship of his Creator, wherefore he and his family found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and received instruction to build an ark, or large vessel, for the preservation of his own race, and of every species of living creatures. See Genesis vi. 14.

when the fountains of the great deep were broken up, the windows of heaven were opened, and those overwhelming torrents began to fall, which continued forty days without abatement or intermission. The waters, thus brought upon the earth, from the heavens above and from the depths beneath, augmented gradually for the space of five months, when they rose to a considerable elevation above the tops of the highest mountains, and every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the earth, except Noah and they that were with him in the ark.*

The awful decree of Omnipotence being thus accomplished, a wind was caused to pass over the earth, in consequence of which the flood began to assuage, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat.

From this period, the waters subsided so rapidly, that, on the first day of the tenth month, the tops of the hills began to appear; and, toward the latter end of the ensuing month, Noah opened one of the windows in the ark, and let out a raven, which flew to and fro till the earth was dry, but brought him no satisfactory intelligence. He then sent forth a dove three times, intermitting

* This vessel, supposed to have been built in the form of an oblong square, with a flat bottom, and a sloping roof elevated one cubit in the middle, is said to have consisted of three stories, which were divided into apartments, and properly supplied with light and air by means of windows. Its dimensions, allowing the scripture cubit to contain 21,388 of our inches, were 547.2 English feet long; 91.2 broad, and 54.72 high. Though it had neither sails nor rudder, it was well adapted for lying steadily on the water, and consequently for preserving the lives of its numerous inhabitants.

seven days between each excursion. The first time she returned quickly, having found no resting place ; the second time she remained abroad till evening, and then brought an olive leaf in her mouth, as a proof that the waters were greatly subsided ; and the third time she returned no more.

On the first day of the first month, answering to the twenty third of our October, Noah removed the covering of his ark, in order to take a view of the circumjacent scenery, and perceived that the earth was entirely cleared of the waters. He remained, however, on board the ark till the twenty seventh day of the second month, or the eighteenth of December, when he came forth, by his Maker's direction, with his family and all that were with him, having continued, with his various charge, under the especial protection of the Deity, for the space of one year and ten days, according to the antediluvian computation ; or, according to the present, three hundred and sixty five days.

Thus was desolation brought upon the earth by the wickedness and impenitence of mankind : and thus was the love of God manifested in the preservation of the only family, consisting of eight persons, which retained the profession and practice of religion in the midst of universal licentiousness.

CHAPTER II.

From the Deluge, to the confusion of Languages at Babel.

B. C. 2347. **A**NXIOUS to express his gratitude for that distinguished act of mercy which had preserved his family from the recent judgment, Noah, immediately upon his debarkation, built an altar, and offered a sacrifice of every clean beast and of every clean fowl. An action which proved so acceptable, that God is said to have smelled a sweet savour, and to have declared that he would no more curse the ground for man's sake ; but that it should enjoy an uninterrupted succession of seasons, till the period of its final dissolution. The patriarch and his family were also honoured with a solemn blessing, and received the Divine permission to appropriate the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fishes of the sea to their own use, and to eat of them as freely as they had hitherto done of the herbs and fruits of the earth : they were, however, strictly enjoined to abstain from the blood of every living creature, to avoid shedding that of their fellow mortals, and to punish the crime of murder with death.

The Deity, likewise condescended, on this memorable occasion, to make a covenant with the objects of his especial favour, respecting the future safety of the terraqueous globe, and promised as a token of his immutable determination, to set his bow in the clouds when it rained, that the sons of men might look on it, and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature that moveth upon the earth.

Noah, having received these inestimable marks of affection from the Great Object of his adoration, descended from the mountains of Ararat, whereon the ark had rested, and applied himself to the labours of husbandry. He also planted a vineyard, where, at the time of the vintage, he drank too freely of the inebriating juice of the grape, and lay carelessly uncovered within his tent. In this disgraceful attitude he was discovered by his son Ham, who instantly ran to apprize his brothers of the circumstance, and to invite them to behold and ridicule the infirmity of their parent. Shem and Japhet, however, were too tenacious of the patriarch's honor and their own obedience to comply with so improper a request ; and therefore, having provided themselves with a garment, they walked backwards and covered their father, with filial respect and decorum ; in consequence of which Noah, when he awoke, bestowed a solemn benediction upon them ; but denounced a dreadful curse against Canaan, the fourth son of the offender, saying, " Cursed be Canaan, a * servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren."

* As we have already observed that some authors are inclined to suppose Cain the progenitor of the blacks, on account of the mark which God set upon him ; so many persons imagine that the origin of that people may be traced to Canaan, on account of this singular and heavy curse. This point we shall leave to the private judgment of our readers : but it is proper to remark, that the curse was awfully accomplished in the extirpation or subjugation of the Canaanites by the Jews ; in the subsequent expeditions of the Assyrians and Persians ; in the memorable conquests achieved by the Greeks and Romans in Phœnice and Palestine ; and in the total subversion of the Carthaginian state and people.

No farther particulars are recorded respecting Noah, but that he died in the nine hundred and fiftieth year of his age. The Orientals, however, affirm that he was buried in Mesopotamia, where his sepulchre is still shown, in the vicinage of an edifice which is called Dair Abunah, or "the monastery of our father."

As all mankind are descended from the three sons of Noah, who were preserved from destruction by the merciful appointment of their Creator, it seems requisite to sketch out some particulars concerning these persons, and their immediate descendants, not only for the instruction of our juvenile readers, but also to render this department of our work complete.

Japhet, who appears to have been the eldest son of Noah, was blessed for his dutiful behaviour to his father, in these terms : " God shall enlarge Japhet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem, and Canaan shall be his servant." This benediction seems to have been uttered in the spirit of prophecy, and has been fully completed in the great possessions which fell to the posterity of Japhet, viz. to Gomer, the father of the Gauls and Germans ; to Javan, the ancestor of the Greeks ; and to Meshech, the progenitor of the Muscovites and other European nations.

Shem, though the second son of Noah, seems to have had the right of primogeniture vested in him, and his posterity are twice recited by the inspired historian : but as the histories of these patriarchs are more brief than those of the descendants of Ham, nothing can be collected from scripture respecting them, except their ages and the time when they begat their sons, which merely enables us to collect the chronology of this period. The birth of Shem seems to have happened about the year

of the world 1558, for at the birth of Arphaxad, two years after the flood, he is said to have been one hundred years old. He received a solemn blessing from Noah, as a remuneration of the dutiful action which he performed in conjunction with his brother Japhet, and died in the six hundredth year of his age, leaving behind him five sons : viz. Elam, Ashur, Arphaxad, Lud and Aram, from whom sprang the Persians, the Assyrians, the Hebrews, the Syrians and other Asiatic nations.

With respect to Ham, the youngest son of Noah, we have already remarked that he was cursed, for his irreverent conduct toward his father, not in his own person, but in a branch of his posterity. This curse, falling upon Canaan, rather than upon the offender himself, has given rise to many conjectures and disputations among the learned, some of whom suppose that the patriarch expressed his resentment in this manner to avoid cursing Ham, whom God had recently blessed, on his landing from the ark ; and others imagine, with a greater appearance of reason, that Moses designed, by reciting this prediction, to show the Israelites that the people of Canaan laboured under an ancient curse, and consequently to prepare them for the destined subjugation of that idolatrous race. Of the transactions of Ham, subsequent to that disgraceful one which has been already noticed, nothing is recorded in the blessed volume of inspiration. He appears, however, to have left four sons, Cush, Mizraim, Phut and Canaan, who became the progenitors of the Ethiopians, Egyptians, Philistines and Canaanites, with other nations inhabiting Africa and Asia.

B. C. Shortly after the demise of Noah, his three
1996. sons, Shem, Ham, and Japhet, removed with

their respective families, from the neighbourhood of Ararat, and travelled from the east, till they arrived at an extensive plain in the land of Shinaar, where they immediately resolved to take up their abode. In consequence of this determination, it was proposed to build a city, and a tower whose top might reach to heaven, for the express purpose of preventing the dispersion of their families, and in order to make them a sign, or name, on the earth. Accordingly the foundations were laid, and the structure carried on to a considerable height, bricks supplying the want of stone, and slime, or bitumen, being used instead of mortar : but God, who, in infinite wisdom, had decreed the welfare of his creatures, by that identical circumstance which they so anxiously sought to elude, compelled the builders to relinquish their design, by introducing a total confusion of languages. The city immediately took the name of Babel, or *confusion* ; and the whole race of Noah, who had hitherto spoken one language, and lived in one great community, were scattered abroad upon the face of all the earth, as a requisite preliminary to the planting of commonwealths, states, and kingdoms.

CHAPTER III.

From the confusion of Languages to the birth of Moses.

THE design of this work being, avowedly, to present our readers with a view of *Scripture History*, and such particulars as are indispensably necessary to connect or illustrate certain parts of the Old and New Testaments, we shall now follow the example of the inspired penman, in taking leave of all the patriarchs from whom the numerous tribes of gentiles descended, and in fixing our attention upon Abram, the son of Terah, who appears to have been peculiarly favoured with the affection of his Creator, and in whose family the true worship was maintained, under various circumstances, till the coming of the Messiah.

B. C. Abram, the illustrious progenitor of the Jewish
1921. nation, appears to have been about seventy four years old when he removed, with his aged father Terah, his wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot, from the place of his nativity into the land of Haran, where he had not long resided before Terah died, and he was commanded, by the Almighty, to depart into another country, where he should enjoy the especial protection of heaven, and experience such a wonderful increase, that, in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed.

Obedient to this injunction, the patriarch removed, with his family and servants, into Canaan, and built an altar to the Lord in the neighbourhood of Sichem, where

he was honoured with an appearance of the Deity,* and received a consolatory assurance that his descendants should, in process of time, possess the land in which he was now a stranger. A severe famine, however, which, occurred in Canaan, compelled him to seek a temporary residence in Egypt, and exposed him to some inconveniencies on account of his wife, whose personal charms attracted the notice of Pharaoh ; but, the providence of God interfering on his behalf, Sarai was restored, without molestation to his arms, and a royal edict was promulgated for his safe conduct out of the kingdom.

Grateful for this deliverance, Abram returned to Bethel, where the famine had now ceased, and offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving upon the altar which he had erected during his former residence in that country. Meanwhile the great increase of his nephew's herds occasioned such contentions among the herdsmen, that he deemed it expedient to separate, and accordingly gave Lot the choice of removing to any part of the country which he thought proper. Hereupon Lot removed to

* As frequent mention is made, in the Sacred History, of the appearance of the Supreme Being to his creatures, and as various passages of scripture, imply that no man can see God and live, it may be necessary to remind our juvenile readers that, the glorious personage who appeared, under the old dispensations of grace, to the patriarchs and prophets, was JESUS CHRIST, the second person in the holy Trinity, who being in the *form of God* thought it no robbery to be *equal with God* ; of whom it is said that, “ he both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be *Lord both of the dead and living* ;” and who is reverentially described, by St. Paul, as the *brightness of God's glory* and the *express image of his person*, upholding all things by the word of *his power*. See Philippians ii. chap. and 6 verse ; Romans xiv. chap. and 9 verse ; and Hebrews i. chap. and 3 verse.

the fertile and irriguous plain of Jordan in the vicinage of Sodom ; and Abram pitched his tents in the land of Moreh, where he contracted a friendship with three of the wealthiest inhabitants, viz. Mamre, Aner, and Eshcol, who rendered him many important services.

B. C. 1912. About seven years after the separation of Lot and Abram, the former was unfortunately taken prisoner, with all his family, by Chedorlaomer and his allies ; but Abram having engaged the assistance of his three friends, Mamre, Aner, and Eshcol, surprised the conquerors, by night, at Dan ; pursued them to Hoba on the left of Damascus ; and brought the captives back, in triumph, to their own habitations. The king of Sodom was no sooner apprised of this gallant exploit than he came out to congratulate Abram upon his success, and to offer him all the booty, as a remuneration for his timely assistance : the patriarch, however, nobly refused to accede to this proposal, and instead of accepting any recompense, presented Melchisedek, a priest of God, with tithes of all the spoils.

Soon after this transaction, Abram removed to Mamre, where he was indulged with a fifth vision of the Deity, and encouraged with fresh assurances of especial favour and protection. Hereupon he ventured to acknowledge that he was unable to comprehend how these repeated promises could be accomplished whilst he continued childless, and should, in all probability, be obliged to leave his substance to his steward, Eliezer. The Almighty then assured him that not Eliezer, but a son of his own should be his heir, and that his posterity should eventually become more numerous than the stars of heaven. As Abram, at this time, was eighty five years old, and Sarai, turned of seventy four, had been long

deemed barren, an ordinary faith might have been staggered at such a declaration, but the scripture informs us that, "he believed in God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. "He presumed, however, to demand a sign, and God readily granted his request. Abram, having killed a goat, a ram, and a young heifer, with a pigeon and turtle dove in obedience to his Maker's command, divided the beasts, and then, joining the pieces, laid the birds upon them, whilst himself stayed to protect the sacrifice from the fowls of the air. About sunset he was suddenly overpowered with sleep, and a horror of great darkness, during which it was revealed to him that his posterity should sojourn, and sustain many afflictions, in a strange land, for the space of four hundred years, at the expiration of which time God would take vengeance on their oppressors, and bring them safely into the land of promise. This important revelation was immediately followed by a vision of a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp, which glided between the victims, as a solemn ratification of the covenant made between God and the patriarch. "In that same day," says Moses, "the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt, unto the great river, the river Euphrates."

B. C. Sarai, not suspecting that she was to become
1911. the mother of the promised heir, and naturally judging herself, on account of her advanced age, to be past all possibility of gestation, gave her handmaid to Abram, in hope of becoming a mother by proxy, according to the custom of that age and country. Hagar, however, soon acted with such intolerable insolence, that her mistress broke out into bitter complaints against her, and finally treated her with such severity, that she

fled from her presence, and wandered in the road to Sur, leading to Egypt ; till, weary and disconsolate, she sat down by a fountain. Here she was accosted by an angel, who persuaded her to return and submit herself to her mistress ; assuring her that she should soon bring forth a son, whom she should call Ishmael ; that his posterity would multiply exceedingly ; that they would prove extremely fierce and warlike ; that their hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against them ; and that they should dwell in the face of all their brethren. Encouraged by these assurances, Hagar called the place where she met the angel, Beer-lahairoi, or " the well of him who lives and sees me ;" and returned to the house of Sarai ; where she soon gave birth to a male child, and named him Ishmael, according to the angel's direction.

About thirteen years after this event, God vouchsafed to ratify his former covenant with the patriarch, by changing his name from Abram to Abraham, assuring him that he should become the father of many nations ; that kings should proceed from him ; and that his descendants should certainly possess the land in which he now resided as a stranger. As a trial of his obedience, God commanded him to circumcise all the males in his family ; and, to complete his happiness, he informed him, that Sarai, whose name was now changed to Sarah, should bear him a son, who should inherit all these blessings. At this declaration Abraham fell upon his face, in order to conceal the irreverent laughter which resulted from the improbability of what he heard, and began to intercede for the preservation of Ishmael, whom he had hitherto considered, and brought up, as the heir of all his substance. The Deity, however, assured him,

that these blessings were not designed for Ishmael, but for a child of his hitherto barren wife, whom he should name Isaac ; that Ishmael should, indeed, be blessed, and become the father of a great nation ; but that Isaac alone should be entitled to the covenant of promise.

B. C. 1897. God had no sooner departed, than Abraham obeyed the divine command relative to himself, and the other males of his family, and was, soon afterward, honored with another visit, more remarkable than the former. Sitting one day under the umbrage of a tree near his tent, he beheld three persons, whom he supposed to be travellers, at a distance, and going toward them, invited them to partake of some refreshments. Having obtained their consent, he ordered a repast to be prepared, and in this interview received a fresh assurance that Sarah should bear a son, within the year. Sarah, who appears to have listened at the tent door, burst out into laughter at this declaration ; and the stranger demanded the reason of her ill timed mirth in such a serious manner, that she was overwhelmed with confusion, and attempted to deny it ; but her divine guest convinced her, that it was impossible to hide any thing from his observation, and reminded her that nothing was impossible with God.

The heavenly visitors now rose up to pursue their journey, and Abraham accompanied them, till one of them, whom Moses calls the Lord, gave him to understand that the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah had ascended to heaven, on account of the extreme depravity of their inhabitants, and that he was going down with a resolution to destroy them, if upon inquiry their wickedness should be found equal to the report of it. Abraham was no sooner apprized of this circumstance than the

recollection of his nephew Lot, and a lively compassion for his fellow mortals, emboldened him to plead on behalf of such righteous persons as might possibly be found amongst the ungodly, and his humble solicitations were crowned with such success, that God declared, if but ten just men were found in the place, he would lay aside his indignation for their sake.

Toward the cool of the evening, two angels, who appear to have been charged with the execution of the divine judgment, approached Sodom, and were invited to the house of Lot, whom they found sitting in the gate. They had scarcely, however, accepted his proffered hospitality, before a crowd of citizens assembled before the house, and demanded, in a tumultuous manner, that the strangers should be brought out to them. Lot, who was no stranger to their base intentions, endeavoured to appease them by rational and persuasive arguments, and even proposed to sacrifice his own daughters to their licentiousness for the preservation of his guests : but as this offer was rejected with disdain, and Lot himself was threatened with violence, the angels suddenly drew their kind host into the house, shut the door, and struck the riotous multitude with blindness ; by which means their nefarious designs were rendered abortive. The angels next acquainted Lot with the nature of their commission, and exhorted him so earnestly to provide for the safety of all his friends and relatives, that he went, before day break, to his sons in law, and warned them of the impending danger ; but they either disbelieved or contemned the news as unworthy of their notice, and positively refused to quit the city.

The orient clouds were no sooner tinged with the rays of morning light, than the angels reminded Lot of

his perilous situation, and, on his appearing rather dilatory, laid hold on him, together with his wife and daughters, and brought them out of the city, urging them to flee with all imaginable precipitation to the mountains, and warning them not to look back, lest they should be involved in the general destruction. Lot considering his extreme danger, and fearing lest he should be unable to reach the mountains, which were yet far distant, earnestly requested permission to retire to a small city, in the vicinage of Sodom, then called Bela, but afterward distinguished by the appellation of Zoar. This petition was mercifully granted, and he was commanded to take refuge there immediately, as the divine judgment should not be executed till he had reached his asylum. Immediately after sunrise, Lot entered Zoar ; and the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were all destroyed by a dreadful shower of fire and brimstone which God is emphatically said to have rained down from heaven. Lot's wife, also, having violated the angel's injunction, and turned her eyes toward her former habitation, was instantly deprived of her existence, and changed into a pillar of salt, as an object of terror to the disobedient and unbelieving.

Shortly after this memorable occurrence, Lot quitted Zoar, and took up his abode, with his two daughters, in a cave situated among the mountains on the east of the dead sea, or lake Asphaltites. In this sequestered dwelling, the young women, dreading lest they should die childless, which in that age was accounted the greatest reproach, laid a plan by which their father was deceived into the crime of incest, and they became the mothers of two children, from whom sprang the warlike nations of the Moabites and Ammonites, against

the Israelites fought under Moses, Joshua, and other leaders, with various success.

Abraham, having learned the sad fate of Sodom, from the smoke of the country which is said to have ascended like the smoke of a furnace, removed from Hebron into the land of the Philistines, where the same adventure happened to him as he had, on a former occasion, met with in Egypt ; for Abimelech, king of the Philistines, supposing Sarah to be the patriarch's sister, took her into his house, and secured her for his own bed. In consequence of an alarming dream, however, he returned her untouched to her husband, and loaded her with several considerable presents, after mildly rebuking Abraham for his want of confidence in the people among whom he had come to sojourn.

B C. Some time after this transaction, Abraham, 1896. who had now attained to the hundredth year of his age, received the accomplishment of his Maker's gracious promise, by the birth of Isaac, in whom God had predicted that* all the families of the earth should be blessed. The child of promise, having received the rite of circumcision, and been suckled by his exulting mother, was weaned at the customary time ; a feast was made to all the household on the joyous occasion ; and the venerable parents appear to have been in the zenith of happiness. This exquisite felicity was, indeed, damped, for some time, by Sarah's resolving to cast out Hagar and her offspring, who had both acted disrespect-

* This promise was fully accomplished in the person and expiatory sufferings of JESUS CHRIST, who, as touching his manhood, was lineally descended from Isaac.

fully toward the young heir, but who were still dear to the patriarch. At length, however, God having confirmed Sarah's proposal, and promised to provide for the welfare of Ishmael, the patriarch consented to send his bond woman and her son away, that they might have no opportunity of disputing the inheritance with Isaac.

Hagar having received a supply of bread and a bottle of water from her affectionate master, departed with her son, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba, till the water being spent, and her own strength probably exhausted, she laid the object of her anxious solicitude under a shrub, or small tree, and sat down, at a considerable distance from him, expecting that he must soon die for want. While this supposition bedewed her cheek with tears, and she exclaimed in an agony of grief, "Let me not *see* the death of my child!" an angel of God called to her out of heaven, assuring her of the divine protection on behalf of her son, and repeating the former declaration that he should become the father of a great nation. He also directed her attention to a well of water, and thus obviated her cares and inquietudes. After this period Ishmael is said to have dwelt in the wilderness, and to have become an expert archer as he advanced to years of maturity. The inspired historian has likewise informed us, that Hagar took a wife for him out of the land of Egypt; and it appears from many concurring testimonies, that he eventually became the father of that warlike but extraordinary people, anciently known by the appellation of Ishmalites, but now called Bedouins, or Arabs of the Desert, who, notwithstanding the various revolutions that have happened in the world, still seem to retain the

disposition and mode of life spoken of, by the angel of God, previously to the birth of their progenitor.

Meanwhile Abimelech, who had long perceived that Abraham's affairs were attended with a peculiar blessing, proposed an oath to that patriarch, by which he should bind his posterity to live in amity with the royal family of Philistia, and to act with the same candor and fidelity toward them which he (Abimelech) had on all occasions shown to Abraham. The pious son of Terah readily acceded to this proposal ; but first desired that a dispute might be decided respecting a well which the Philistines had forcibly taken from him. Abimelech avowed his total ignorance of this outrage, and reminded the patriarch that no complaint had been preferred on the occasion till the present moment. Hereupon the dispute was amicably settled, and, a present of seven ewe lambs being accepted by the king as a testimony of Abraham's right and property, the well was called Beersheba, or " the well of the oath," because of the covenant to which they had there mutually sworn. The pleasantness of the country and the friendship of the prince induced Abraham to establish his residence among the Philistines. Here, also, he planted a stately grove, and erected an altar unto the Lord.

B. C. 1871. On this spot, Abraham appears to have experienced the most lively pleasure, in contemplating the goodness and celebrating the worship of that Adorable Being, who had brought him out from Ur of the Chaldees, given him favor among the people with whom he now sojourned, augmented his wealth exceedingly, and rejoiced his aged heart with the birth of a son every way deserving of paternal affection. But his faith and obedience were now to be tried in the most severe

manner ; and that very son, who was the staff of his declining years, the promised head of a numerous race, and the fountain of many inestimable blessings, was commanded to be led to a certain mountain, and there offered up, as a burnt sacrifice, by the hand of his own father. "Take now thy son," said God, "thine *only son*, Isaac, *whom thou lovest*, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." A command so strange in itself, so inconsistent with the mercy of a God, and apparently so inimical to the accomplishment of the Divine promises, might have been reasonably expected to stagger the patriarch's faith, or at least to induce him to expostulate on the severity of the injunction. Abraham, however, made no hesitation to obey ; but, leaving to God the completion of his own predictions, set out the very next morning, and on the third day came within view of Mount Moriah, the place appointed for the dreadful sacrifice. He now left his servants at some distance, and calmly ascended the eminence, accompanied by his son, who was laden with wood and other materials for a burnt offering, and who, perceiving nothing of a victim, could not forbear questioning his father respecting it. "My father," said the ingenuous youth, "behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" If Abraham's situation could possibly be rendered more acutely distressing, it must certainly have been at this moment, when the child of his fondest affections, and the sole comfort of his aged wife, presented to his contemplation the instruments of destruction, and propounded so affecting a question respecting the victim. But even this was unable to shake the patriarch's faith or resolution, who accordingly replied that God would provide for the occa-

sion ; and, having erected the altar and laid the wood in order, bound his son, and stretched out his hand to fulfil the Divine injunction. At this awful crisis, however, the voice of God issued from the clouds, saying “ Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing to him, for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.” Hereupon the joyful patriarch offered a ram, which was caught by its horns in a thicket, instead of his son, and called the scene of his trial Jehovah-jire, or “ the Lord will provide,” which we may safely consider, not only as an allusion to the answer he had given Isaac, but as a prediction of that great sacrifice which Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, should offer, in his own person, for the redemption of mankind. “ Abraham,” says the adorable Saviour, “ rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.”*

B. C. 1860. Abraham seems to have enjoyed the most perfect happiness with his son and his beloved consort till his tranquillity was interrupted by the death of the latter, which happened, at the city of Hebron, in the hundred and twenty seventh year of her age. The patriarch went thither to mourn for her, and to procure her an honourable sepulture ; and, accordingly, requested the inhabitants to sell him a burying place. The citizens unanimously offered him the choice of the best sepulchre in their possession, and Ephron the Hittite made a voluntary offer of the cave of Machpelah which Abraham had expressed a wish for : but, the patriarch insisting on paying the full value for it, an agreement

* See Gospel of St. John, viii. 56.

was made for four hundred shekels* of silver, which were immediately paid down in full weight, and Abraham, being now the lawful owner of the cave, and field belonging to it, deposited in this place the remains of his aged wife.

About three years after this transaction, the venerable patriarch, being extremely anxious to see Isaac happily married, called one of his most faithful servants, and, having made him solemnly swear to procure his son a wife out of his own kindred, gave him necessary instructions and authority to conclude the marriage. The servant accordingly departed, with ten camels laden with presents, and proceeded with all possible speed to Haran in Mesopotamia, where Nahor, Abraham's brother, resided.

On his arrival in the vicinage of Haran, he made his camels kneel down by a well of water, and addressed himself in prayer to the Almighty, earnestly imploring that he would vouchsafe to bless his undertaking, and show, by a sign, who should become the wife of Isaac, "Behold," said he, "I stand by the well, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water. Let it, therefore, come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, let down thy pitcher I pray thee that I may drink, and she shall say, drink and I will give thy camels drink also : let the same be the person whom thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac ; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master." To this humble request God vouchsafed an immediate and satisfactory answer ; for the servant had scarcely

* As the Hebrew shekel, according to the best estimations, is equivalent to three of our shillings, the price which Abraham paid for this burying place amounted to about sixty pounds sterling.

ended speaking, when Rebecca, the beautiful daughter of Bethuel approached, with a pitcher upon her shoulder, and accomplished the token by cheerfully drawing water for the stranger and his camels. Hereupon Abraham's messenger presented her with an earring, and a pair of bracelets of pure gold; and was, soon after, invited into Bethuel's house, where, partly by his magnificent presents, and partly by his relation of God's gracious dealing with his master, he obtained the damsel for Isaac, and devoted the rest of the day to mirth and festivity.

Next morning this faithful agent expressed a wish of returning to his master, and, with some difficulty, prevailed on the relatives of Rebecca to permit his departure, after they had bestowed their warmest benedictions on the amiable object of their affection. On approaching the habitation of Abraham, Rebecca perceived a man taking a solitary walk in the fields, and, on understanding that it was Isaac, she alighted from her camel and covered herself with a veil, according to the custom of the country, in order to receive his first salutation. The servant then gave a faithful narration of his journey and success; and Isaac took the lovely stranger to his mother's tent, where she became his wife.

Abraham may be reasonably supposed to have rejoiced in the felicity of his son upon this occasion; but he deemed it advisable, though now in the hundred and forty first year of his age, to console himself for the loss of his beloved Sarah, by marrying Keturah, who bore him six sons, each of whom he portioned and sent into the east,* that they might not interfere with Isaac's inherit-

* These sons of Abraham appear to have settled in Arabia Petrea and Arabia Deserta, where some traces of their names may be still perceived.

ance. Nothing further is recorded of this illustrious patriarch, who justly acquired the name of "father of the faithful," except that he lived to the venerable age of an hundred and seventy five years, and that he was buried, by Isaac and Ishmael, in the cave of Machpelah.

B. C. Rebecca, after continuing barren for the 1838. space of nineteen years (during which time her husband constantly prayed to God on her behalf,) became pregnant, and was delivered of two sons, whom she named Esau and Jacob. Esau became a famous huntsman, and consequently the darling of his father, who was extremely fond of venison ; but Jacob was the favourite of Rebecca, who knew that he should eventually inherit the privileges of paternal blessing and primogeniture, God having declared, before the birth of these twins, that the elder should serve the younger.

When the two brothers were about twenty years old a circumstance occurred which it would be unpardonable to omit, and which seems to imply that Rebecca had entrusted her younger son with the secret of God's determination respecting his future fortune. Esau, having returned faint and weary from the toils of the chase, was particularly struck with the appearance of some red pottage which had been sodden by his brother, and earnestly requested that it might be given him. Hereupon Jacob proposed that his brother should swear away his birth right, and Esau, observing that the right of primogeniture was of little importance to a man at the point of death, rashly consented ; in consequence of which he was, afterward, called Edom.

B. C. Some time after this transaction, Isaac was 1805. compelled, by a grievous famine, to seek another habitation, and accordingly determined to go into Egypt ;

but God diverted him from that resolution, and commanded him to repair to Gerar, where he should enjoy the peculiar protection of Heaven. The patriarch readily obeyed this injunction, and removed into the dominions of Abimelech, in which situation Rebecca passed for his sister, in order to shield him from any danger that might have resulted from her beauty. This artifice, however, appeared unnecessary, for, whether the Philistines recollected the judgment with which they had been formerly threatened on account of Sarah, or whether the morals of the people were at this time uncorrupted, it is certain that Rebecca was unmolested, and Isaac had no reason to complain on her account. It appears, however, that the king himself had a shrewd suspicion they were man and wife ; for, looking, one day, out of his window, he saw Isaac caressing Rebecca in such a manner, as convinced him that they were related by much closer ties than those of consanguinity. Hereupon he sent for the patriarch, and asked him how he could act with such dissimulation as to affirm that the woman who was really his wife was no other than his sister ? Isaac pleaded his father's excuse, " Lest I die for her ;" but Abimelech replied, it was by no means kindly done, for that some of his subjects might ignorantly have taken liberties with her, and by that means involved the whole nation in a dangerous sin. In order to prevent such a circumstance for the future, a royal proclamation was issued out whereby the Philistines were strictly forbidden to molest Rebecca or her husband, upon pain of death.

Isaac appears to have lived peaceably in Gerar for some time after this occurrence ; but the rapid increase of his wealth gave such umbrage to the Philistines, that

they began to regard him with an eye of jealousy, and gave him much disturbance by filling up the wells which his servants had dug, and by many other ill offices. These vexatious circumstances compelled him to remove from place to place, till Abimelech, recollecting the covenant that had been solemnly ratified between his father and Abraham, and plainly perceiving that Isaac's concerns were under the immediate protection of God, deemed it adviseable to terminate all disputes by a new league, or by a revival of the old covenant of friendship. Accordingly the king, and Phicol the chief captain of his host, went to the habitation of the patriarch, where they acknowledged that they saw the hand of Providence in his augmenting prosperity, and therefore requested him to take an oath of friendship and alliance to them, desiring no other terms, than that he and his descendants should refrain from molesting the Philistines, and act with the same kindness toward them, as both himself and his father had experienced. This proposal was readily accepted by the patriarch, who entertained his visitors with the utmost hospitality, and after a mutual ratification of the covenant, sent them away in peace. Immediately after their departure, some of Isaac's servants brought him the pleasing intelligence that they had found water, upon which account he called the place Beersheba.

The tranquillity which resulted from this new alliance between Isaac and Abimelech, was soon disturbed by Esau's marrying two Hittites, Judith the daughter of Beer, and Bashemath, the daughter of Elon. The patriarch, however, still regarded his son with peculiar affection, and determined to make him the heir of all his substance. Accordingly, judging from the ad-

vanced state of his age, the dimness of his sight, and other circumstances, that his dissolution was approaching, he determined to bestow his benediction upon Esau before he died. With this intent he ordered him to go in quest of some venison, and to dress it to his palate, intimating that he designed to bless him on that day. "Make me savoury meat," said he, "such as I love, and bring it to me that I may eat, and that my soul may bless thee before I die."

B. C. Esau readily obeyed his father's command ; 1759. but whilst he was absent, Rebecca, who had overheard the whole conversation, dressed her son Jacob in Esau's clothes ; put the skin of a kid about his hands and neck, the better to resemble her firstborn who was extremely hairy ; and preparing a dish of savoury meat, sent him into his father, notwithstanding his great reluctance, and his dread of incurring a curse rather than a blessing. Isaac appears to have been much surprised at the expedition with which his commands were obeyed, and certainly entertained some doubts respecting the identity of his son's person, for he desired him to come near that he might feel him, and earnestly demanded "Art thou my very son Esau?" However he was at length satisfied, and pronounced the irrevocable blessing, saying, "The smell of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed. Therefore God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, with plenty of corn and wine. Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee ; be thou lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee. Cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee."

Whilst Rebecca and her son were congratulating themselves upon the success of their plan, Esau returned from the chase, and invited his father to eat of the venison which he had prepared. Isaac, in an agony of grief, exclaimed, that he had already eaten of such a repast, and bestowed his blessing upon Jacob, who had contrived to deceive him. Hereupon a mournful scene ensued between the venerable patriarch and his first-born, the former trembling exceedingly, and the other crying with a bitter cry, "Bless me, even me also, O my father !" Isaac, however, strenuously insisted that his benediction should not be recalled. "I have blessed him," said he, "yea and he shall be blessed." But in order to assuage the immoderate grief of Esau, who upbraided his brother with thus deceitfully extorting first his birthright, and now his blessing from him, he blessed him also in these words. "Thy dwelling shall be the fatness of the earth, and of the dew of heaven from above. By thy sword and thy bow shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother ; and it shall come to pass, that when thou shalt have the dominion, thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." These declarations were so far from satisfying Esau, that he determined to revenge himself upon Jacob as soon as his father should die. However he gradually laid aside his anger, and finding that his parents had an insurmountable aversion to the daughters of Canaan, he espoused Mahalath the daughter of Ishmael, and removed with his family to Mount Seir.

Meanwhile, Rebecca, dreading the accomplishment of Esau's threat, desired her youngest son to go to Padan Aram, in order to take a wife from the family of her brother Laban ; Isaac also laid an injunction upon

him to the same effect, and gave him a fresh benediction at his departure.

Obedient to the command of his beloved parents, Jacob quitted Beersheba, and proceeded on his journey till he came to the vicinage of Luz, where, being overtaken by the night, he took a stone for his pillow, and lay down to sleep. In this place he was indulged with a glorious vision, for whilst he slept, he dreamed that he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and rendered peculiarly remarkable by a number of angels, who ascended and descended upon it, whilst the Deity, who stood above, vouchsafed to assure him, that his posterity should eventually inherit the circumjacent country ; that his seed should be multiplied as the dust of the ground ; and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. Surprised at this solemn and important revelation, Jacob awaked from his sleep, and exclaimed with mingled awe and gratitude, " Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not !" Early the next morning he took the stone which had served him as a bolster, and set it up for a pillar of remembrance : this pillar he solemnly anointed with oil, according to the custom of the country, and called the place Bethel, or the house of God. He also made a solemn vow, that if God would grant him his protection, feed, clothe, and bring him safely back to his father's house, the Lord should be the only object of his worship ; that he would cheerfully offer the tenth part of his substance to him ; and that the monument which he had now erected should indeed be honoured as God's house.

Having finished his pious address to the God of his fathers, Jacob proceeded peaceably to the house of his

uncle Laban, where he was received with the most unequivocal marks of affection, and where he became so deeply enamoured of Rachel, Laban's youngest daughter, that he gladly consented to serve his kinsman seven years, on condition of receiving her hand in marriage. Laban readily acquiesced in this proposal, and the son of Isaac served with such alacrity and cheerfulness, that the seven years appeared to him as no more than a few days : but when the stipulated service was accomplished, and Jacob demanded the dear remuneration of all his toils, Laban shamefully violated his own promise, and injured his nephew in the most cruel manner, by introducing him to the apartment of Leah, who seems to have been as homely as her sister was beautiful. Next morning Jacob remonstrated on the impropriety of this conduct, and expressed his resentment in such terms, as induced the aggressor to apologise, and to offer Rachel also, at the expiration of Leah's nuptial week, for seven other years of faithful service.

Jacob, having acceded to this proposal, was, at length, rewarded for his former cares and toils ; and Rachel became, if possible, more dear than ever, whilst Leah was obliged to content herself with a formal and constrained civility: This great partiality, however, seems to have been displeasing to the Almighty ; for Rachel was, for a considerable length of time, deemed barren, while her neglected sister became the happy mother of many children. Her firstborn she called Reuben, intimating that God had taken cognizance of her affliction and given her a son, who might, probably, engage her husband's affection ; her second she named Simeon, because she said the Lord had heard her complaint ; her third she called Levi, in the fond hope that her con-

sort would be now cordially joined to her ; and the fourth she distinguished by the name of Judah, thinking herself bound to praise God on account of her fruitfulness.

B. C. Rachel, by this time, was so extremely mortified at her sister's felicity, that she began to utter many complaints against Providence, and peevishly told Jacob, that unless he gave her children also, she should assuredly fall a victim to unconquerable grief. This observation kindled the anger of her husband, who justly observed, that he was not possessed of the power of working miracles, and reminded her that God alone had withheld from her those blessings which had fallen to the lot of Leah. Silenced by this remark, she bethought herself of giving her handmaid to Jacob, according to the custom of the country, and accordingly desired him to take Bilhah, by whom he had two sons, the first of whom Rachel named Dan, meaning that God had judged in her favour, and the other she called Napthali, to express the violent struggle she had with her sister. "With great wrestlings," said she, "have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed."

Leah, supposing that she had entirely left off bearing, gave her maid Zilpah to Jacob, whose first child she called Gad, or a troop, expecting many more to follow, and the next she named Asher, to express her own happiness at such an increase. She was also blest with two more sons, whom she called Issachar and Zebulun, and with a daughter, whom she named Dinah. Rachel's earnest prayers were likewise heard, and she was happily delivered of a son, whom she called Joseph, in hopes that God would vouchsafe to grant her another.

By this time Jacob having completed his fourteen years of servitude, requested his uncle's permission to

retire with his family and the fruit of his labours to the habitation of his aged parents : but Laban earnestly requested him to stay a little longer, and promised to reward him with all the speckled, spotted, and brown cattle among the sheep, and with all the spotted and speckled among the goats. Laban's avarice, however, invented so many stratagems to defraud his nephew, that the latter was compelled to use others in his own defence, by which means, notwithstanding several arbitrary changes of the first agreement, he became exceeding rich and was enabled to purchase male and female servants, camels, oxen, &c. which excited such jealousy in Laban and his sons against him, that they began to look upon him with an evil eye, and to accuse him of having greatly diminished their substance.

B. C. Jacob, having perceived this sensible change
1739. in the manners of his relations, and being likewise encouraged by the Lord to return unto the land of his fathers, sent for his wives, Rachel and Leah, into the field, and, after recapitulating the harsh treatment which he had received from their father, and the numerous mercies of God toward him, made them acquainted with his design of quitting Padan Aram without the permission of Laban, and of paying a visit to his venerable parents. His wives approving this project, he immediately collected all his servants and effects, and began his journey toward Canaan, whilst his father in law was fully occupied, at a considerable distance, in shearing his sheep.

On the third day, Laban hearing of his children's precipitate departure, set out in pursuit ; but seven days elapsed before he came up with them, by which time they had passed the river Euphrates and pitched their tents on the mountains of Gil ad.

It is highly probable that Laban had resolved to take some signal vengeance upon Jacob ; but, God having appeared to him in a dream, and threatened him with a dreadful punishment in case of his attempting any thing against his pious relative, he only upbraided him with the strange and precipitate mode of his departure which had occasioned him much vexation and deprived him of the satisfaction either of caressing his children, or of sending them away with the customary marks of affection and respect. He also complained bitterly of the loss of his gods, which Rachel, without the knowledge or consent of her husband, had taken, and carefully concealed among the camel's furniture.

To the first part of this complaint, Jacob boldly replied by reminding his father in law that he had been grossly deceived in the article of marriage, repeatedly wronged in the payment of his wages, and frequently treated in the most unkind and arbitrary manner, notwithstanding his known fidelity, and the readiness with which he had endured the united inconveniences of toilsome watchings and inclement seasons : but, with respect to the idols he professed himself ignorant of the whole transaction, and voluntarily offered that the most diligent search should be made among his people, and that the thief, if discovered, should expiate his crime by death. Laban gladly availed himself of this proposal, and searched every tent with the utmost care and circumspection. Rachel's presence of mind, however, rendered his labour fruitless, and he was consequently obliged to submit in silence to his loss. Some fresh expostulations now took place between Jacob and the Syrian, who, after some time, agreed to make an amicable alliance, and to rear a pile of stones, on the spot, as a monument of their per-

petual friendship. This plan was immediately reduced to execution ; a mutual oath was taken that neither party should pass beyond that pillar (called Gilead, or the heap of witness) to molest the other ; a solemn sacrifice was offered upon the occasion ; and, next morning, Laban bestowed his blessing on the whole family, and returned to the land of his ancestors.

Jacob was, in all probability, highly satisfied by the happy termination of this affair ; but one fear succeeded another, and the dread of Esau's resentment gave him fresh occasion of inquietude. A vision of angels, however, who met him on the road, allayed his anxiety for awhile, and emboldened him to send a deputation of his servants to his elder brother, in order to acquaint him with the prosperous state of his affairs, and to announce his return from Padan Aram. The messengers returning with intelligence that Esau was advancing to meet him with four hundred followers, Jacob concluded that he certainly designed to cut him off. However, on cool reflection, he deemed it expedient to provide for his own defence ; and accordingly divided his family into two bands, under the idea that if one perished the other might possibly escape. He then addressed himself to God in prayer, acknowledging his signal mercies and his own unworthiness, and earnestly requesting protection against his brother. The idea of appeasing Esau by presents next suggested itself to his mind ; and he accordingly sent two hundred and twenty goats, two hundred ewes, twenty rams, thirty she camels with their colts, forty cows, ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten colts, in separate droves ; and commanded their drivers to tell his brother, when they met him, that they were presents sent by Jacob unto his lord Esau.

Next morning he caused his family and flocks to cross the brook Jabbok, whilst he himself tarried at Mahanaim and was favoured with another vision of the same Divine Person whom he had seen before at Beth-el, and who is said, on this occasion, to have wrestled with him till the break of day, when he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh, which was immediately dislocated ; but, as the patriarch still refused to let him go unless he blessed him, he gave him a solemn benediction, and changed his name from Jacob to Israel, which signifies " a man that has prevailed with God."

Grateful for this fresh demonstration of his Creator's affection, Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, or " the face of God," and proceeded cheerfully, notwithstanding his lameness, till he had overtaken his family. His interview with his brother was equally pleasant and affecting ; and he proceeded without molestation to Succoth, where he erected a temporary residence for himself, and booths for his cattle. From this place he removed to Shalem, a city of the Shechemites, and pitched his tents in a field which he purchased of the king for a hundred pieces of money : he also raised an altar to " the mighty God of Israel," and seems to have lived in perfect harmony with the inhabitants of the country till a circumstance occurred which compelled him to remove to Bethel.

Shechem, son of Hamor, prince of the country, happening to meet with Dinah, the daughter of Leah, became enamoured of her beauty, and took some unwarrantable liberties with her ; but immediately offered to atone for his indiscretion, by making her his wife, and earnestly besought his father to procure an alliance between his own family and that of Jacob. Hereupon

Hamor held a conference with the sons of the patriarch, urging the violence of Shechem's passion, and offering to give the most splendid dowry that could be demanded for the gratification of his desires. Jacob's sons, though burning with rage at the insult that had been offered to their family, affected to listen with complacency to these proposals, and, after some consideration, agreed to give their sister to Shechem, and also to intermarry with the natives of the place, on condition that all the male citizens consented to receive the religious rites by which God had distinguished his people from all other nations. This offer was accepted, and the Shechemites were prevailed on, by their beloved prince, to become as the family of their new neighbour. But they had no sooner performed their part of the treaty, than Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, rushed suddenly into the city, massacred all the male inhabitants, took all the women and children captive, and drove off all the cattle in triumph. An act of baseness, for which Jacob rebuked them in the severest terms, and which would certainly have subjected them to the vengeance of the adjacent nations, had not God interposed on behalf of their father, and commanded him to retire immediately to Bethel, where he had formerly appeared to him when he fled from his brother Esau.

B C. Pursuant to his Maker's injunction, Jacob de-
1732. parted from Shalem, and, having caused all the idols which his family had taken from the Shechemites, or brought from Padan Aram, to be hidden at the foot of a tree proceeded to Luz, afterward called Bethel, without molestation. Here he erected a new altar which he inscribed to the God of Bethel ; and here Deborah, his mother's nurse, was buried near an oak, which was

called Allon bachuth, or "the oak of mourning." However, he made but a short stay at this place, being anxious to visit his aged father, whom he had not seen since his journey to Mesopotamia. As he was travelling toward Ephrath, his beloved Rachel fell in labour, and, perceiving that her dissolution was approaching, called the child Benoni, or "the son of my affliction;" but, after her decease, Jacob changed this name into Benjamin, or "the son of my right hand." The remains of this amiable woman were interred in the road to Ephrath, and a stone monument was erected to her memory, which, even in Moses's time, was known as "the pillar of Rachel's grave." About this time, also, Reuben, having become enamoured of Bilhah, his father's concubine, committed an outrage, which afflicted the patriarch so deeply that he reflected on it with sorrow to the time of his death.

Jacob now hastened to quit a place which had proved so unfortunate; and came at length to Mamre, the habitation of his venerable father, where he resided till that patriarch breathed out his pious soul into the hands of his Creator, after a well spent life of a hundred and eighty years. His body was carried to the cave of Macpelah, and his obsequies were performed by his two sons Jacob and Esau.

The happiness which Jacob had enjoyed during his last residence with Isaac, had been greatly diminished by the cruel and illiberal conduct of some part of his own family, Joseph, who was then in the seventeenth year of his age, and peculiarly dear to his father, on account of his superior wisdom and virtue, became an object of jealousy to his brethren; and on his telling them some remarkable dreams, which clearly prefigured his future

success, and their humiliation, their envy was converted into the most irreconcilable hatred, and they actually resolved to take him off by assassination.

An opportunity soon offered for the gratification of their revenge ; for Jacob, being uneasy that he had not heard from his sons since they had removed, with their flocks, to Shechem, sent Joseph to inquire concerning their welfare ; and the defenceless youth was immediately adjudged to death by his unnatural relatives, who agreed to kill him, and to dip his coat in blood, in order to persuade his father that he had been devoured by wild beasts. Reuben, however, dissuaded them from imbruing their hands in his blood, and advised them to let him down into a pit, where he might perish with hunger. This proposal was immediately carried into execution ; but a troop of Ishmaelites happening to pass, with spices, balm, and other merchandize, on their way to Egypt, Judah started the idea of selling him for a slave, and observed that his being carried away would answer their purpose as well as his death. Hereupon Joseph was drawn up from the pit, and delivered, for a certain sum, to the merchants, who immediately carried him off. Reuben, who had been absent during this transaction, was so violently affected by the loss of his brother, whom he had designed to rescue, and uttered such pitiable lamentations, that they were more solicitous than ever to conceal their nefarious conduct ; and at length agreed to dip his party coloured coat in the blood of a kid, in order to deceive their father. This project was instantly executed, and the ensanguined garment carried to the patriarch, who exclaimed, in all the agony of paternal woe, “ Joseph is, without doubt, rent in pieces !” and positively refused to listen to the

voice of consolation, saying, "I will go down into the grave, unto my son, mourning."

On the arrival of the Ishmaelites in Egypt, Joseph was sold to an officer of the king's guard, named Potiphar, in whose service he conducted himself with such decorum and integrity, that the whole affairs of the house were soon entrusted to his management. He had passed some years in this situation, when Potiphar's wife, captivated by his comeliness and accomplishments, endeavoured to seduce him into the crime of adultery, and, after several fruitless attempts, accosted him in so passionate and immodest a manner, that Joseph fled abruptly from her presence, leaving his upper garment, by which she strove to detain him, in her hands. Fired with indignation at this repulse, she immediately resolved to ruin the virtuous youth; and accordingly, having assembled all her domestics, impudently charged him with having insulted her in an unpardonable manner, and produced the garment as a confirmation of her malicious assertions. Potiphar, coming home soon afterward, was easily persuaded to revenge the supposed outrage, and caused the innocent Hebrew to be immediately confined in the king's prison.

B. C. Notwithstanding this ill requital of his extraordinary fidelity, Joseph still adhered strictly to the worship of his Creator, and the regular practice of those virtues which had rendered him odious to his narrow minded brethren. This exemplary conduct, together with the uncommon prudence that he manifested, on all occasions, soon gained the esteem of the Egyptian gaoler, who treated him with all the kindness that his situation would permit, and even entrusted him with the care of his fellow prisoners. Two of these men,

the king's chief butler and baker, told Joseph some remarkable dreams, which he readily interpreted, and even predicted the exact time when they should be fulfilled ; observing that the butler should, within three days, be restored to his former employment, but that the baker should, at the same time, be condemned to death. He then requested the former to use his interest at court for his liberation ; relating the mournful story of his early captivity, the infamous behaviour of his late mistress, and what else appeared most likely to interest the compassion of his auditor.

At the predicted time Pharaoh's servants were called from the prison, when the baker, according to Joseph's assertion, was sentenced to be hanged, and the butler was graciously pardoned, and reinstated in his honourary employment. The promise, however, which he had given to Joseph, was totally forgotten, and two years elapsed before the unfortunate Hebrew was taken from his melancholy confinement.

B. C. About this time Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was 1714. much alarmed by two remarkable dreams ; in one of which he beheld seven fat cows grazing on the banks of the Nile, but these were soon attacked and devoured by seven others, lean and ill favoured, which seemed to be neither larger nor fatter in consequence of their repast ; and in the other he saw seven full ears of corn devoured by seven that were thin, and blasted with the east wind. These dreams being considered as portentous of some eventful occurrence, immediate recourse was had to the Egyptian soothsayers and magicians, but none of them could return a satisfactory answer, till Joseph, being suddenly recollected by the butler, and sent for by Pharaoh, explained them to this

effect. "The seven good kine are seven years ; and the seven good ears are seven years : the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years ; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh. What God is about to do he showeth unto the king. Behold there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt : and there shall arise after them seven years of famine, and all the plenty shall be forgotten, and the famine shall consume the land. And for that the dream was repeated to Pharaoh, it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass."

Joseph, having thus clearly interpreted these singular dreams, advised the king to appoint a discreet minister over his whole dominions, who might erect granaries and send officers into every province to lay up a fifth part of all the produce of the seven plentiful years, as a resource against the time of famine. This proposal was highly applauded both by Pharaoh and his counsellors, and, after some consultation, it was agreed that Joseph himself should be empowered to carry it into execution. He was, accordingly, appointed overseer of Pharaoh's house ; the king gave him his own signet off his finger ; vestures of fine linen and golden ornaments were instantly brought to adorn his person ; the name of Zaphnathpaaneah, or "a revealer of secrets," was bestowed upon him in consideration of his uncommon wisdom ; and he was allowed to ride in the second chariot of state, while the attendants who ran before it cried "Bow the knee." The daughter of Potipherah, priest of On, was also bestowed upon him in marriage, that a splendid al-

liance, together with the royal favour, might ensure the esteem, and prompt obedience, of all ranks of the Egyptians.

The pious son of Jacob, being thus suddenly delivered from his afflictions, and raised to such an enviable height of power, applied himself sedulously to his new employment ; and, having made a progress through the whole kingdom, arranged all things with such exquisite judgment and coherence, that before the expiration of the plentiful years, his granaries were filled above numbering. During this time his domestic felicity was greatly increased by the birth of two sons, the first of whom he named Manasseh, intimating, that God had made him forget all his toil ; and the other he called Ephraim, “because,” said he, “God hath rendered me fruitful in the land of my affliction.” The seven plentiful years were no sooner expired than the predicted famine began to appear, not only in Egypt, but also in Canaan and the adjacent nations. As soon therefore as its effects began to be felt, Joseph opened his stores, and commanded that corn should be sold, both to the Egyptians and to foreigners, who flocked to him from all the neighbouring countries.

In this posture of affairs, the family of Jacob seems to have suffered much inconvenience, till the patriarch, hearing of the admirable precaution which had been taken in Egypt, dispatched ten of his sons thither, to purchase corn, keeping only Benjamin, his youngest favourite, at home. Upon their arrival they were directed to the governor for an order, and, prostrating themselves before him, earnestly petitioned that he would permit them to purchase grain for their subsistence. Joseph, recognizing the features of his brethren, and beholding

the accomplishment of one of his dreams* in their present behaviour, assumed a severe look, and demanded; in an angry tone, whence they came ; intimating a shrewd suspicion that they were spies, who came to discover the weakness of the land. Terrified at this accusation, they submissively assured him, that they were all one man's sons ; that they resided in the land of Canaan ; and that they had left a younger brother with their aged parent, who had been blessed with another besides, but he was now no more. Upon this declaration, Joseph observed that they had now an opportunity of proving their integrity, by fetching their youngest brother ; and that, unless one of them were deputed for this purpose, while the rest remained in custody, he should be convinced of their treasonable designs, and should punish them accordingly.

With this threat the sons of Israel were sent to prison, and kept in a dreadful state of anxiety for three days ; but at the expiration of that time, Joseph sent for them, and proposed that one only should remain a prisoner with him, whilst the rest returned with provision to their family, and, at the same time, promised that, on the appearance of their youngest brother, he should be delivered up safe, and they should have free permission to traffic in the land. He then caused Simeon, who had probably been one of his most implacable enemies, to be bound before their eyes, and sent back to prison, whilst they, supposing the governor to be ignorant of their

* He dreamed that he and his brethren were employed in binding sheaves in a field of wheat, when his sheaf arose and stood upright, and those of his brethren prostrated themselves before it. At another time, he dreamed that the sun, moon, and eleven stars, made obeisance to him in a similar manner.

language, acknowledged that this distress was a just reward for their inhumanity toward their brother Joseph, whose cries and entreaties had not been able to prevent his misfortune, or to soften their obdurate hearts.

Finding it impossible to obtain any better terms from the ruler of Egypt, they, at length, set out on their journey ; but Joseph had contrived another cause of surprise for them ; for on their halting, to give some provender to their beasts, they found all their money tied up in their sacks, and immediately concluded that the imperious Egyptian had practised this expedient in order to enslave them at their next visit. On their arrival at the land of Canaan, they related all their melancholy adventures to the patriarch, who was much grieved at the detention of Simeon, but infinitely more so when he heard that Benjamin alone could redeem him. The contemplation of this sad necessity overpowered him with indescribable anguish ; the recollection of his beloved Rachel flashed upon his mind ; and he exclaimed in the bitterness of his soul, " Me have ye bereaved of my children ; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not ; and ye will take *Benjamin* away : all these things are against me !"

Jacob appears to have withstood the solicitations of his sons for a considerable time ; but at length the dreadful effects of famine, and the persuasions of Judah, who promised to answer for Benjamin's safety at the hazard of his own life, induced him to part with his favourite for a time, having first given his sons the strictest charge concerning him, and desired them to carry double money, and some presents with them, in order to deprecate the anger of the Egyptian lord, whom they had painted in such unamiable colours.

When the travellers had accomplished their journey, and presented themselves before Joseph, he caused his steward to conduct them to his house, where he designed to entertain them with a dinner ; but they were so effectually alarmed by the circumstances of their former visit, that they suspected some design was forming against their liberty, and therefore seized the earliest opportunity of adverting to the singular occurrence of finding their money in their sacks, and of testifying their innocence by tendering the same sum again, with a fresh supply for other provisions. The steward, however, satisfied them on this head, and introduced them to their brother Simeon, informing them, at the same time, that they were to dine with the governor at noon.

As soon as Joseph came home, he inquired after their health, and that of Jacob, and demanded whether that was their youngest brother who stood before him. Benjamin answered this question by a respectful inclination of his head ; and Joseph, having given him his blessing, ordered the dinner to be served. The brethren were placed according to their seniority, whilst he sat at one table by himself, and his Egyptian guests at another ; for the Egyptians would have considered it an abomination to eat with an Hebrew. Joseph, therefore, according to the custom of the country, sent dishes from his own table to all his brethren ; and they were greatly surprised at the exactness with which he served them according to their respective ages ; but much more so when Benjamin received a portion five times larger than any of the rest.

After they had concluded their repast, the sons of Israel began to think of taking leave, and, next morning, set out on their return ; but they had not proceeded

far before they were pursued and overtaken by Joseph's steward, who accused them of carrying off his lord's drinking cup. Astonished at this extraordinary charge, and conscious of their own innocence, they immediately proposed that the thief, if detected, should suffer death, and that all the others should become slaves ; but when the steward, after a strict search, drew out the cup from Benjamin's sack, they rent their clothes in despair, and returned mournfully to the city. Joseph reprimanded them severely for their ungenerous requital of his civilities ; but observed that, as he was unwilling to punish the innocent with the guilty, he should only detain the youth with whom the cup was found, and that his brethren were at liberty to depart without molestation.

Judah, who had so earnestly persuaded his father to send Benjamin into Egypt, and who had voluntarily become a surety for his safety, was cut to the heart by this unexpected sentence ; and, emboldened by despair, he stepped forward to plead on the imaginary culprit's behalf. He addressed himself in the most pathetic language to Joseph, expatiated on Jacob's extreme fondness, eagerly offered to endure the proposed punishment in his own person, and drew so lively a picture of the agonies which would assuredly rend his aged parent's bosom, if his present entreaties were disregarded, that Joseph was at length overcome with the violence of his own feelings, and, having dismissed all the Egyptian attendants, made himself known to his brethren, while a shower of tears relieved his oppressed heart, and the warmth of his embraces convinced them of his forgiveness and unabated affection. "Be not grieved," said the generous Hebrew, "nor angry with

yourselves that ye sold me hither ; for God did send me before you to preserve life : for these two years hath a famine been in the land ; and yet there are five years in which there shall neither be earning nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance ; so, it was not you that sent me hither, but God ; and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt.”

During this affecting scene, some of the Egyptians ran to inform their sovereign that the governor's brethren were come to buy corn ; in consequence of which, Pharaoh was pleased to issue out an order for the removal of Jacob's family into his dominions, promising them his protection, and assuring Joseph that they should not want provisions or any other favour that he could bestow. Joseph gratefully accepted the offers of his royal patron, and sent waggons for the conveyance of his family, together with ten asses laden with the choicest commodities of Egypt, and an abundance of provision. He also presented his astonished brethren with changes of raiment ; and, having distinguished his favourite by the addition of three hundred pieces of silver, dismissed them, with a strict charge that they should not fall out by the way.

On their arrival at their father's abode, Jacob eagerly inquired after his darling Benjamin, and deemed himself completely happy in folding that object of affection once more to his aged bosom ; but when he heard the unexpected news of Joseph's safety and splendid condition, the pious son of Isaac fainted beneath the oppression of his contending emotions, and on recovering his senses, he seemed to consider the whole

as a mere delusion : the sight, however, of the Egyptian carriages and presents effectually dispersed his doubts, and he exclaimed in a transport of joy, " It is enough ; Joseph my son is yet alive ; I will go and see him before I die !"

The eager desire of seeing a son whom he had so long considered as dead, may be naturally supposed to have hastened the patriarch's departure, and to have enabled him cheerfully to overcome all the obstacles which the number of his descendants, flocks, &c. laid in his way. But as he deemed it incumbent upon him to express his gratitude to God, and to implore the Divine blessing before he entered Egypt, he went first to Beersheba, to offer a sacrifice, both because it was the place where his progenitors, Abraham and Isaac, had lived so long and tranquilly, and because it was in his road to Egypt, being the utmost boundary of Canaan, toward the south. At this place he was honoured with a fresh vision of the Deity, who encouraged him to proceed on his journey, promising that Joseph should close his eyes with filial affection, and that his posterity should, in due time, be brought out of Egypt, and planted in the Land of Promise.

B. C. Thus encouraged by the voice of his Maker, 1706. Jacob hastened toward the metropolis of Egypt, and sent one of his sons forward to apprise Joseph of his arrival. Hereupon the minister of Pharaoh hastened to meet his beloved father ; and their mutual sensations were such as exceed the powers of description. After this interview, Joseph presented five of his brethren to the king, who condescended to question them respecting their occupation, and gave them free permission to settle in the land of Goshen. Jacob was

also introduced to the Egyptian monarch, on whom he bestowed a solemn benediction; and the strangers were, soon afterward, established in their new settlement, where they received a regular supply of corn from the granaries during the famine, and were entrusted with the care of Pharaoh's cattle.

Whilst the family of Israel were happily maintained in Goshen, by the care and attention of Joseph, the Egyptians were reduced to great extremities by the famine, which rendered corn so extremely dear, that they were not only drained of all their money, but even compelled to sell their cattle, houses, lands, and eventually their own persons, for subsistence; so that they all became slaves to the crown, except the priests, who, receiving a supply of provision out of the royal stores, were exempt from this public calamity. At this period we are told, that many of the people were transplanted from one end of the kingdom to the other, and that the unhappy multitude went some one way, and some another, patiently submitting to every species of misery, in order to obtain a scanty supply for their craving appetites. At length, however, Joseph revived their hearts by asserting that a favourable crop might be expected the next season, when the earth should be fertilized by the overflowing of the Nile, and when a fresh distribution of cattle, corn, and lands should be made, that they might return to their former avocations, with a reservation of one fifth part of all the produce of the country, which should be set apart for the king. The poor people were too grateful for the seed which Joseph delivered to them, and too much elated by the idea of a new harvest, to cavil at this restriction. They, therefore, cheerfully applied themselves to the cultivation of their respective lands ;

and from this period, the fifth part of all Egyptian products, except those belonging to the priests, were considered as the legal property of the crown.

Meanwhile the family of Israel augmented rapidly, both in wealth and numbers, under the immediate blessing of God, who had in so wonderful a manner brought good out of evil, and even made the malice of Joseph's brethren subservient to the accomplishment of his own pleasure concerning the preservation of a stock, from which should spring an illustrious and peculiar nation, and from which, according to the flesh, should descend the promised MESSIAH. At length, Jacob, perceiving by the decay of his natural strength, that his death was approaching, sent for his son Joseph, and addressed him to this effect. "If you still retain that affection for me which has hitherto marked your character, and if I have indeed found grace in your sight, I request that you will take an oath to carry my remains, after my death, out of this land, and deposit them in the burying place of my progenitors." Joseph readily acceded to this proposal; and the venerable patriarch bowed himself upon the bed's head, in token of grateful adoration to his Creator.

B. C. 1689. Soon after this transaction, Joseph, hearing that his father was at the point of death, took his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to see him, and to implore his benediction before he died. At the sight of his beloved grand children, Jacob raised himself up in his bed, and spoke with extraordinary cheerfulness; recapitulating the gracious promises which he had received, at different times, from the Almighty; and observing that, on account of his beloved Rachel, Joseph's sons should become the heads of two tribes,

and receive a double portion in the division of the Land of Promise. He then desired his grandsons to approach the bedside ; and Joseph placed them in such a manner that Jacob might lay his right hand upon the head of Manasseh, and his left upon that of Ephraim : but the patriarch, crossing his arms, laid his right upon the younger, and his left upon the elder. Joseph, supposing this position to result from a mistake, attempted to rectify it ; but his father told him, he acted by divine direction ; and, in bestowing his benediction, he both preferred Ephraim to Manasseh, and gave him the nobler blessing. “ Manasseh,” said the dying patriarch, “ shall become a people, and he also shall be great : but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.”

Jacob, finding himself much enfeebled, and his death rapidly approaching, caused all his other sons to be assembled, and addressed them in the following* prophetic language :

“ Reuben, thou art my firstborn, the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power ; but, because thou hast had so little regard to thy father’s honor as to defile his bed, all the blessings to which thou wast entitled by the right of primogeniture shall pass away like the unstable waters, and thou shalt not excel among thy brethren.

“ Simeon and Levi are indeed brethren, not only by the ties of consanguinity, but in disposition ; for they have mutually rendered themselves instruments of

* It is necessary to remark, that these predictions of Jacob are not given exactly in the *language* of the Old Testament ; but the *meaning* is strictly preserved.

cruelty. May my soul be ever preserved from such bloody counsels, and my honor unpolluted by their guilt ; for their anger hurried them on to commit murder, and their self will caused them to break through every obstacle. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce ; and their wrath, for it was cruel !

“ Judah, thy name signifies praise, and thou shalt receive the praises of thy brethren ; for they shall bow down before thee as their lawful sovereign,* and thy enemies shall be compelled to submit their necks to thy yoke. Like a young lion shall my son fall upon the prey, and like an old lion, ready to rush upon it : who shall rouse him up ? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and the people be gathered unto him : his portion shall be so fertile, that he shall bind his ass to the vine, and wash his garments in the juice of the grape. His eyes, also, shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

“ Zebulun shall reside on the borders of the sea ; and his commodious havens shall extend as far as the city of Sidon.

“ Issachar, like a strong but indolent ass, shall voluntarily submit to carry burdens in the midst of his brethren, rather than be deprived of his pleasant inheritance ; and shall prefer tribute and servitude to the toils of war and conquest.

“ Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel ; but, as a serpent, or adder, that lieth in the

* The accomplishment of this prediction will be seen, in its proper place, both in the Jewish monarchs, and in the person of the Messiah, who is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

path, and bites the traveller by the heel, he shall overcome rather by policy and stratagem than by open force.

“Gad shall be sorely tried, and frequently infested by robbers ; but he shall eventually overcome them.

“Asher’s portion shall make him happy ; for it shall abound with corn, oil, and other dainties, that shall be fit for a monarch’s table.

“Naphtali, like a hind newly set at liberty, shall excel his brethren in swiftness, and in the sweetness of his eloquence.

“Joseph is a fruitful bough, planted by a well, whose branches run up, and spread against the wall. Men, armed with the envenomed arrows of rancor and envy, have shot at him, and caused him much affliction : but his bow abode in strength, and his hands were made strong by the mighty God of Jacob, who, from thence is the shepherd,* the stone of Israel, and who shall bless my son with blessings of heaven above, and with blessings of the deep that lieth beneath. My blessings have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills ; they shall rest on the head of Joseph, and on the crowned head of him who was separated from his brethren.

“Benjamin is of a fierce and warlike disposition : he shall, therefore, ravin as a wolf, destroying his enemies in the morning, and dividing the spoil at night.”

* From this prediction, it is evident that the dying patriarch had a glorious view, by faith, of the person and transactions of our REDEEMER, who is repeatedly designated in scripture by these appellations, “the Shepherd of Israel,” “the Good Shepherd,” and “the Precious Stone,” which, though rejected by the Jewish builders, is become the head of the corner.

Jacob, having thus pronounced his prophetic blessing to each of his sons, solemnly charged them to deposit his remains in the tomb of his ancestors, and laid himself again on his bed, where he expired, in the hundred and forty seventh year of his age.

At this affecting moment, Joseph threw himself upon the corpse of his beloved parent, and expressed all the sorrow which might be naturally supposed to result from the loss of such a friend, and the warmth of his own filial affection. At length, having given full vent to his grief, he ordered the body to be embalmed, and desired some of Pharaoh's officers to acquaint their royal master with his father's last request, whilst he himself made suitable preparations for the funeral, and the Egyptians devoted seventy days to respectful lamentation. Pharaoh readily granted his favourites request concerning the sepulture of his parent, and ordered all the officers of his household, and the chief grandees of the kingdom, to accompany the funeral pomp. Accordingly the cavalcade consisted of a great number of chariots, and a prodigious multitude of horsemen, who, having crossed the Jordan, halted for seven days at the threshing floor of Atad, and performed some funeral ceremonies, which induced the inhabitants of Canaan to call the place Abel Mizraim, or "the Mourning of the Egyptians." Then resuming their march, they proceeded to the cave of Machpelah, where the body of the venerable patriarch was interred with due solemnity.

Notwithstanding the affection which Joseph had, on all occasions, shown toward his brethren, they were yet so ignorant of his magnanimous disposition, that, on their return from Israel's interment, they began to dread

the effects of his resentment, and even sent an humble message to acquaint him that his father had earnestly desired he would pardon all past injuries, and still grant them his protection. Joseph was affected, even to tears, at this circumstance ; and, sending for his petitioners, effectually dispersed their fears by the warmth of his fraternal embraces, and the readiness with which he promised them his future friendship and support. "Fear ye not," said the pious ruler of Egypt, "I will nourish both you and your little ones."

B. C. 1635. Nothing more is recorded of Israel's family till the time of Joseph's death, when he sent for his brethren, and told them, in the same prophetic spirit which had illuminated his aged father, that God would assuredly perform his gracious promises, by bringing their posterity out of Egypt, and giving them the land of Canaan for an inheritance. He, therefore, earnestly requested that they would not bury him in Goshen, but lay his body in a coffin, and deposit it in some secure place, whence they might take it, on the accomplishment of his predictions, to the Land of Promise. Having taken an oath of his brethren for the fulfilment of this wish, Joseph resigned his spirit into the hands of his Maker, in the hundred and tenth year of his age, having continued for the space of eighty years in possession of those honors which the Egyptian monarch justly conferred upon his extraordinary merit and wisdom.

Subsequent to this melancholly occurrence, the descendants of Israel increased prodigiously both in strength and numbers : but as they were now deprived of their most powerful friend, and the throne was filled by a new prince, who was either ignorant or forgetful

of the services which Joseph had rendered to the Egyptian crown and nation, they soon excited the jealousy of the natives ; who began to fear that they would eventually cover the whole face of the kingdom, and, therefore, resolved to weaken them by taxes, labours, and every species of tyrannical oppression.

This cruel project was immediately put in execution ; but as it appeared, after several years, that neither the hardships inflicted by law, nor the cruelties exercised by the Egyptian taskmasters, produced the desired effect, the chief Hebrew midwives were summoned to court, and strictly enjoined to destroy every newborn male, and let the females take their chance. But these women, who feared God, and abhorred the very idea of such unnatural barbarity, neglected their orders, and saved all the children without discrimination. Hereupon a diabolical edict was promulgated, commanding that every male child of the Hebrews that was born should be cast into the Nile, and that none but the females should be permitted to live. By this decree the unfortunate Israelites were reduced to the sad necessity of drowning their own children, or of seeing them drowned by their merciless oppressors ; but whilst their hearts were rent with anguish at their hopeless situation, and the Egyptians were triumphing in their calamities, God was bringing about the accomplishment of his immutable promise ; and an infant was born, to humble the pride of Egypt, and to lead his groaning countrymen, in triumph, from the house of bondage.

CHAPTER IV.

From the Birth of Moses, to the Conquest of Canaan by the Israelites.

B. C.
1571. **SOME** time after the promulgation of Pharaoh's inhuman edict, Amram the son of Kohath, and Jochebed the daughter of Levi were blest with a son, of such exquisite beauty that they felt a more than ordinary reluctance to obey the royal mandate, and accordingly ventured to conceal him for the space of three months ; but, at length, their dread of a discovery, which would inevitably have been attended with fatal consequences, compelled them to expose him like the rest. Accordingly they enclosed him in a small ark of bulrushes, and committed him to the mercy of the waters, leaving his sister Miriam, at a convenient distance to observe the event.

The reeds and flags with which the Nile abounded soon arrested the progress of the ark ; and Pharaoh's daughter, who was approaching the river with an intent to bathe, immediately sent some of her retinue to fetch it. Her surprise at the sight of so lovely a child bathed in its own tears, and thus exposed to destruction, was soon succeeded by the softer emotions of compassion. She justly supposed it to be the child of some unfortunate Hebrew, who groaned beneath her father's oppression, and her pity suggested the idea of saving such a beauteous innocent from the common ruin. Accordingly, she resolved to have it educated as her

own son, and young Miriam, who now approached the princess, was sent to procure a Hebrew nurse ; in consequence of which, Jochebed received her infant once more to her arms, with a strict charge to use him as tenderly as if he were her own. As the princess did not know the child's name, she called him Moses, in token of having drawn him out of the water, and dismissed the nurse with a promise of ample remuneration for her care. Jochebed, accordingly, hastened home, to adore her Creator for this unexpected providence, and to impart her felicity to her beloved husband.

In process of time, Moses was taken to the princess, who adopted him as her son, and appointed proper tutors to instruct him in all the branches of learning for which Egypt was renowned. But his parents had given him such excellent counsel respecting the true worship of the Almighty that he made no other use of the princely education which Pharaoh's daughter bestowed upon him, than to confirm himself in his detestation of the Egyptian idols and superstitions. Hence he preferred the reproachful name of an Israelite to all the honors of the court, and took every opportunity of visiting and relieving, to the best of his ability, his unfortunate countrymen.

B. C. 1531. Having observed, one day, an Egyptian using a Hebrew with great barbarity he was so violently exasperated that, seeing no person near, he rushed upon the oppressor, killed him, and buried his body in the sand ; he was not, however, so secure as he imagined ; for on his attempting, soon afterward, to compose a quarrel between two Hebrews, whose cruel bondage could not hinder them from injuring each other, the most passionate of the two asked him whether he

designed to kill him as he had already murdered the Egyptian ? Alarmed at this question, and dreading the most fatal consequences from the king's resentment, Moses immediately quitted Egypt, and retired with all possible expedition to the land of Midian, where he met with just such an adventure as Jacob had in Padan Aram : for whilst he was resting himself by the side of a well, the daughters of Jethro (priest of Midian) came out to draw water for their father's flock ; but were insulted and driven back by the shepherds. Moses instantly rose to espouse the cause of injured innocence, and, having obliged the unmannered rustics to retire, assisted the damsels in watering their flock. On their return home, Jethro inquired the cause of their dispatch, and, on being apprised of the stranger's generous behaviour, he immediately invited him to his house, and kept him with him forty years ; during which time he entrusted him with the care of all his cattle, and gave him the hand of his daughter, Zipporah in marriage.

B C. Moses seems to have lived quietly as a shepherd, or herdsman, in the land of Midian, without ever supposing that Providence designed to render him instrumental toward the emancipation of the afflicted Israelites. But, at the expiration of forty years, the Almighty vouchsafed to appear to him in a burning bush upon mount Horeb, where he called him by name, assuring him that he was the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob ; and informing him that the appointed time was come for the deliverance of their posterity. He therefore commanded him to go immediately to Pharaoh and demand their dismissal ; telling him that the persons who had sought his life were now dead, and he had, consequently, nothing to fear from the Egyptians.

Moses earnestly desired to be excused from this difficult office, and, after making several objections, hinted a doubt that the Hebrews had so far forgotten the God of their fathers that when he should open his commission they would ask, what his name was, in which case he should be at a loss for a reply. Here the Deity vouchsafed to return an answer which he had formerly refused to Jacob, though in terms that seem to have implied reprehension. "I am that I am," said he, commanding him to tell the Hebrews that "I am" had sent him unto them ; that he was the God of their progenitors ; and that he would be acknowledged by this name, throughout all generations, as their deliverer and redeemer. "Not," continued he, "that the king of Egypt will accede to the dismissal of Israel at your request ; but I will stretch out my hand over Egypt, and perform such wonders that he shall be compelled to let them go ; neither shall they come away unrewarded for their long servitude ; for every woman shall borrow of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and raiment : and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters, and ye shall spoil the Egyptians."

Notwithstanding these divine assurances, Moses still acknowledged that his doubts were not removed, and asked what he must do to convince the Israelites that God had really appeared unto him and charged him with such an important mission. The Almighty instantly removed this doubt by two miracles which he wrought in his presence. The first by transforming his rod into a frightful serpent, and then into a rod again ; and the second by smiting one of his hands with leprosy, and then restoring it to its former appearance, he also

declared that if these miracles did not fully satisfy the Hebrews with respect to his message, he should convince them effectually by turning the waters of the Nile into blood.

Still reluctant to undertake so arduous a work, Moses observed that an impediment in his speech rendered him unfit to address either the Egyptian king, or the elders of Israel ; but, as the Divine Being obviated this objection also, by appointing Aaron* for his interpreter ; and as his earnest petition for some other Hebrew to be appointed in his stead was disregarded, he hastened toward Midian to make suitable preparations for his journey.

Having expressed a desire to visit his brethren in Egypt, he easily obtained his dismissal from Jethro, and commenced his journey, with his wife Zipporah and his two children ; but, being smitten with a terrible disease on the road, and a dispute arising respecting circumcising his youngest son, he sent his companions back to Midian ; and proceeded to Mount Horeb, where he met his brother Aaron, and acquainted him with the nature of his commission.

On their arrival in the land of Goshen, Moses and Aaron assembled all the elders of the Israelites, and encouraged them with the hopes of approaching deliverance ; confirming their assertions by the miracles which God had appointed for incontrovertible proofs of his gracious intention. They next went to the court, in order to impart their errand to Pharaoh : but the pre-

* Aaron, son of Amram, and Jochabed, seems to have been born previously to the promulgation of Pharaoh's sanguinary edict.

amble "Thus saith the Lord God of the Hebrews," sounded so strangely in the ears of the idolatrous monarch, that he haughtily replied "I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go," and dismissed his petitioners with a severe reprimand : at the same time ordering his taskmasters to double the labours of the Israelites, and to compel them to gather stubble instead of straw, which had been usually given them, for the purpose of drying their bricks. This command was executed with such tyrannical rigor, that the Hebrew overseers repaired in a body to the court, complaining of the heavy grievance, and earnestly petitioning for redress ; but Pharaoh positively refused to do them justice, and, accusing them of slothfulness, drove them out from his presence. In their return from the palace they were met by Moses and Aaron, whom they accused in the bitterest terms, as the authors of this new addition of misery. "The Lord," said they, "look upon you, and judge ; because ye have made us to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hands to slay us."

As it would have been fruitless to remonstrate, or to offer any thing in his own justification in the present posture of affairs, Moses applied to his Creator, and humbly expostulated on the ill success of his mission. And God condescended to give him fresh assurances of his compassion and immutable love toward his groaning worshippers, bidding him tell them, in his name, that he would indeed deliver them from their cruel bondage, and conduct them safely into that good land which he had promised to their fathers. The Israelites, however, were so completely overwhelmed with despair, that

paid but little attention to these gracious promises ; and Moses himself was so disheartened, that he appeared extremely reluctant to return to Pharaoh with a repetition of his request, till he was, at length, compelled to obey the Deity's command, by such unequivocal declarations and miraculous gifts, as precluded the possibility of farther objection.

Moses and Aaron now presented themselves, the second time, at the Egyptian court, and confirmed their commission by the first miracle, viz. that of transforming the rod into a serpent. Pharaoh merely considered this as the effect of magic, and, sending for some of his most learned magicians desired them to give a similar instance of their art. This was immediately done, and the only superiority which Moses exhibited was, that his rod swallowed up all those of his antagonists ; a circumstance which the king would naturally attribute to his skill or learning.

This miracle was soon followed by another which turned all the waters of Egypt into blood, so that the Egyptians had not a drop that was fit for use : but, as the magicians imitated* this wonderful metamorphosis by the power of their enchantments, Pharaoh still remained incredulous, and still refused to let Israel go.

In consequence of this obduracy God brought a plague of frogs upon the land, insomuch that even the beds, tables, and ovens of the Egyptians were literally

* If the question be asked, Whence came the water that the magicians thus transformed, seeing the running and standing waters of Egypt were already turned to blood ? we reply, probably from Goshen, which escaped all the plagues, or out of the new wells which were immediately dug about the Nile.

covered with those troublesome animals. The magicians imitated this miracle also by bringing a fresh swarm of frogs upon the country ; but Pharaoh was so dreadfully annoyed by the plague that he promised to set the Hebrews at liberty on condition that it was removed. Hereupon Moses prayed unto God that the frogs might be destroyed ; and his petition was answered so quickly, that by the next morning there was not one of these animals left alive ; Pharaoh, however, had only consulted his own convenience by his recent promise ; for whilst his subjects were gathering up the frogs in heaps for removal, lest they should create a pestilence, he was contriving how to violate his own declaration.

On the discovery of this duplicity Moses touched the ground with his rod, in consequence of which all the dust of the earth was changed into innumerable swarms of lice, which infested man and beast in the most dreadful manner. Pharaoh, still incredulous and impenitent, sent for his chief magicians, and ordered them once more to imitate the miracle : but their utmost skill was now baffled, and after many vain attempts to effect a similar transformation, they acknowledged that this wonder was wrought by the finger of God.

Notwithstanding this declaration, Pharaoh continued inflexible to the entreaties of Moses, and still paid so little attention either to the commands or judgments of the Deity, that God resolved to afflict him with new plagues, till his pride should be subdued, and Israel should march triumphantly out of his dominions. Accordingly, on the next day, the air was filled with prodigious swarms of flies, whose bite was so extremely painful and venomous, that the mischief which they did to the Egyptians became altogether intolerable ; though none were

found in the land of Goshen, God having declared that he would put a division between his people and the subjects of Pharaoh, and that the former should enjoy perfect repose, whilst the latter were tormented to madness. Pharaoh, being now alarmed for his own safety, sent for Moses and Aaron, and promised that they should sacrifice to their God, provided it were done within the confines of his kingdom. This proposal they rejected, observing that they must sacrifice such creatures as were worshipped by the Egyptians, and should, therefore, rouse the resentment of the natives to the most ungovernable pitch, insomuch that they might reasonably expect to be stoned for sacrilege. "We will go," said they, "three days journey into the wilderness, and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he shall command us." This answer induced the king to suspect that his petitioners did not intend to return ; but at length he consented, on condition they should not go to a great distance, and by that means obtained a cessation of the plague.

No sooner was the dreadful annoyance removed than the deceitful monarch returned to his former obstinacy, and, without scruple, violated his solemn promise. Accordingly a fresh instance of Divine wrath appeared in a grievous murrain, which swept away the greatest part of the cattle belonging to the Egyptians, while those of the Hebrews remained unhurt.

This affliction, however severe in itself, had not affected the person of the king, who consequently adhered to his first resolution of detaining the Israelites, and withstanding the Great Object of their adoration to the last extremity. Moses and Aaron were, therefore, commanded to sprinkle ashes of the furnace toward heaven, and the dust thus scattered about was immediately con-

verted into a sore disease, which broke out in boils and blains upon man and beast throughout every part of Egypt, except the land of Goshen. Pharaoh, according to custom, sent for the professors of magic ; but they were themselves so effectually smitten, that they durst not appear in the presence of Moses.

The haughty monarch, still remaining unmoved by all the calamities which had befallen his dominions, was now informed that the voice of the God of Israel should be heard in thunder, and his vengeance felt in such tremendous storms of hail as had never been known since the foundation of the kingdom. Accordingly, Moses stretched out his miraculous rod toward heaven, and the awful threatening was instantly accomplished. The sky was suddenly overspread with darkness ; the lightning flashed incessantly from the clouds ; loud claps of thunder followed each other in dread succession ; the hail, mingled with fire, ran along the ground ; men, birds, and animals, were struck lifeless to the earth ; trees, shrubs and flowers were torn from their roots, and whirled into the regions of the air ; and nothing escaped the general devastation, but the wheat and rye, which had but lately sprang up.

This dreadful visitation effectually terrified Pharaoh, who sent hastily for the Hebrew chiefs, and addressed them in the language of penitent humility, earnestly entreating that he might be delivered from the sound of those dreadful thunders, and the destroying shower, on the cessation of which he solemnly declared that the Israelites should be at full liberty to depart. Hereupon Moses obtained a reprieve for the land, and many of the Egyptians, on examining the dreadful effects of the storm, were inspired with awe and veneration for the

God of Israel ; but Pharaoh still persisted in his obstinacy, and consequently drew upon himself fresh punishments.

Moses was now sent to threaten a more fatal curse than any of the preceding, namely, a plague of locusts which should cover the face of the ground and utterly destroy every blade of grass, and every other vegetable substance that had escaped the hail. Upon this declaration, some of the Egyptian courtiers took the liberty to remind their sovereign of the inestimable damage which his dominions had already sustained, and to petition for the release of the Hebrews ; but upon the Israelitish chiefs demanding that the whole body of their people should go together, and that all their cattle and other property should be taken with them, he upbraided them with their ill intentions and thrust them out from his presence. This behaviour was instantly followed by the threatened plague ; myriads of locusts were suddenly brought upon the land, and spreading themselves over the country, began to devour every thing which had escaped the late hail, so that Egypt was in reality reduced to the state of a desert, and its inhabitants were overwhelmed with consternation. Pharaoh soon perceived the dreadful consequences of this disaster, and earnestly sued for a reprieve, but, as on former occasions, his request was no sooner granted than he returned to his impenitence and obstinacy.

This judgment proving ineffectual, Egypt was, soon afterward, smitten with darkness of so dreadful and extraordinary a nature that the Scripture informs us it might be felt. This mournful obscurity affected every part of the country, except that which was inhabited by the Hebrews, and continued three days, during

which time the Egyptians were unable to stir out of their houses, or even to discern each other, so that they were thrown into the utmost consternation, and Pharaoh himself began to be seriously alarmed for the event. At the first return of light, therefore, he sent for Moses and Aaron, and offered to permit the departure of all the sacred people, provided their cattle were left in his possession ; but on their refusing to accede to this proposal he caused them to be thrust out of the palace, and threatened them with the heaviest effects of his displeasure in case they ever presumed to appear before him again. Moses, however, was so far from being intimidated by this menace that he boldly declared, the Egyptians should soon experience such affliction by the destruction of all the firstborn both of man and beast, that they should come, with bended knees, to the Israelites, and conjure them, in the most submissive terms, to depart out of the country ; whilst God should show such regard toward his own people that they should enjoy their usual tranquillity, and that not so much as a dog should dare to move his tongue against them.

Having uttered this awful prediction, Moses retired to the land of Goshen, where he assembled the elders of Israel, and commanded that this month, which was then the sixth of the year, according to the common computation, should from thenceforth be the first month in the sacred calendar ; and that all other annual feasts should be regulated by that of the Passover.* He also

* The ceremony of eating the Passover was prescribed by Moses to the Hebrews during those transactions that passed between him and Pharaoh, though it is postponed to the twelfth chapter of Exodus, in order to avoid an interruption of those wonders which God had wrought on behalf of his favoured

reminded them that on this night, they must save the blood of the Paschal lamb in a bason, and sprinkle the two side and cross posts of their doors with it, that the destroying angel might look upon it, and pass over their houses without giving them any molestation; in memory of which deliverance they were to keep a feast of unleavened bread seven days, and were strictly charged to instruct their children in the meaning of the institution, that they might likewise perpetuate it to future ages.

The appointed hour being come, and the Israelites having provided for their own security, by marking their houses according to the direction of Moses, God sent out his ministers of vengeance, who suddenly dispersed themselves through the land of Egypt, and smote all the firstborn with death, from the eldest son of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the meanest captive, and even to that of every animal in the kingdom. The infliction of this judgment was so sudden and terrific that Egypt was altogether confused, and every habitation of the natives resounded with groans of the dying, and fruitless

people. Every family of the Israelites was to kill and roast a lamb, which they must eat with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and such parts of it as remained after the repast, were to be burnt with fire, that none of it might remain till morning. The express mode of eating is also particularly mentioned, "Thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staves in your hands, and ye shall eat it in haste, for it is the Lord's Passover." We cannot quit the subject without reminding our readers that this was not only instituted as a memorial of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, but as a glorious type of the expiatory sufferings of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, in whose blood alone mankind have remission of sins, and who is emphatically called the *Lamb of God* that taketh away the sin of the world.

lamentations of the survivors. In this dreadful exigence, the affrighted monarch sent hastily for Moses and Aaron, and urged them to quit the kingdom immediately, together with their people, cattle, and all that they had. The Egyptians likewise hastened their departure, and willingly lent them their most valuable jewels and ornaments, in hopes of stopping the dreadful plague which had already made a victim in every house. Hereupon Moses settled the best order which the present confusion would allow among the Hebrews, and, a considerable time before day break, began his march toward the wilderness, at the head of six hundred thousand men able to carry arms, besides a prodigious multitude of old men, women, children, and strangers who joined and followed them in their journey.

As soon as they arrived at Succoth, Moses directed them to form a regular encampment according to their respective tribes and families ; and here the Deity was pleased to command that the firstborn both of man and beast should be henceforth consecrated to him, and that the firstborn of men should be redeemed at the price of five shekels of the sanctuary ; thus reminding the Hebrews of their late extraordinary deliverance, and shadowing forth our redemption by a Saviour.

Moses, instead of taking the nearest road to Canaan through the country of the Philistines, led the Israelitish host along the coast of the Red Sea, to Etham on the borders of Arabia Deserta, which, in Holy Writ, is designated by the name of the Wilderness. But they soon removed, and turned toward Pihahiroth, in compliance with the injunction of their Creator, who now vouchsafed to guide them by a miraculous appearance, which in the day time resembled a column of smoke,

and at night exhibited the radiance of a pillar of fire. And we are expressly told that this phenomenon never forsook them during their wanderings in the desert ; but directed and regulated all their marches and evolutions through forty two encampments.

Pharaoh had no sooner obtained a respite from the vengeance of his offended Maker, and shaken off the first impressions of terror, than he began to repent of dismissing so numerous a body of slaves, and thinking it easy to surprise them among the mountains, he resolved immediately to pursue and bring them back into Egypt. With this determination he assembled a formidable army, and advanced, by rapid marches, to Pihahiroth, where he encamped in full view of the sacred people ; whilst they were so violently alarmed at his approach, that instead of preparing to defend their newly acquired liberty, or relying for protection on the God who had already wrought such miracles in their behalf, they assembled in a tumultuous manner round the tent of their pious conductor, and ungratefully accused him as the author of all their calamities, insultingly demanding “ Were there no graves in Egypt, that thou hast taken us away to die in the wilderness ? ” Moses, however, readily pardoned their ingratitude, and endeavoured to inspire them with more becoming sentiments. “ Fear ye not,” said he “ but stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you today : for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The *Lord* shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.”

Having thus attempted to revive the spirits of his pusillanimous followers, Moses addressed himself in earnest prayer to God, who ordered him to advance

immediately toward the Red Sea, assuring him, that on a motion of his rod, the waters should divide, and make way for the Hebrews to pass through ; and that Pharaoh and his idolatrous army should be certainly overwhelmed if they attempted to pursue them. The divine injunction was immediately executed ; a strong east wind divided the waters of the sea so that they arose in heaps and stood as a wall on either side ; and the miraculous pillar of fire, by removing from the front to the rear of the army, served not only to guide the Hebrews, but to confound and delay the motions of the Egyptians, to whom it is said to have been a cloud and darkness.

The Israelites now advanced into the sea, and continued their march with the same speed and facility as on dry land ; but the Egyptians, who eagerly pursued them, were both retarded in their progress, and thrown into such confusion by the angel who conducted the fiery cloudy pillar, that they soon perceived the madness of their undertaking, and exclaimed with one voice " Let us flee from the face of Israel, for the Lord fighteth for them !" Retreat, however, was now impracticable ; for the Hebrews having reached the opposite shore in safety, and Moses having waved his rod in obedience to God's command, the suspended waves rushed impetuously into their natural bed, and the proud monarch of Egypt, with all his chosen troops, was instantly overwhelmed.

Whilst the sons of Israel contemplated, with mingled awe and gratitude, the floating spoils and carcasses of their enemies, Moses composed a solemn hymn of thanksgiving, and, dividing the assembly into two great choirs, caused it to be immediately performed, with timbrels and other musical accompaniments.

Notwithstanding the spirit of devotion which seemed to inspire the people whilst they chanted the high praises of their Almighty Deliverer, they soon began to exhibit that stubborn and discontented temper for which many of them were cut off previously to their arrival at the Land of Promise : for they had scarcely travelled three days in the desert of Shur, before the bitterness of the waters of Mara^b caused them to murmur a second time against their conductor. God, however, condescended to silence their complaints by sweetening the source of the waters, and gave them some new statutes, together with a promise of rewarding their obedience with the most ample blessings. The fiery pillar then conducted them to Elim, where they formed an encampment on a spot that was rendered peculiarly delightful by twelve salubrious fountains and seventy palm trees.

Having spent three weeks in this pleasant situation, they resumed their march toward the wilderness of Sin, where, their provisions being nearly exhausted, they began to murmur more violently than ever, and even expressed the deepest regret at having suffered Moses to decoy them from the flesh pots, and abundance of provision, which they enjoyed in Egypt, into a wilderness where they expected shortly to perish by famine. Yet, notwithstanding this insolent deportment, which was in reality levelled at God himself, they were graciously forgiven, and assured that they should receive a miraculous supply. This promise was partly fulfilled on the same evening, by a prodigious flight of quails, which came pouring down from Egypt and alighted on every part of the Israelitish camp : and on the next morning the face of the ground, toward the wilderness, was covered with a kind of white dew, resembling a

small hoar frost, which, Moses informed his followers, was the bread that God had resolved to feed them with, during their continuance in the desert. He, therefore commanded them to gather a certain quantity of it every morning, and on the sixth to provide a double portion for their families, because they were not to expect any such supply on the seventh day, which was afterward to be kept holy. The bread thus miraculously given to the Hebrews, received the appellation of *manna*, from the general exclamation "What is this? Whence cometh it?" and a homer full of it was carefully preserved in a vessel, to be afterward deposited in the ark of the covenant, as a perpetual memorial of this singular occurrence.

Leaving the desert of Sin, the Hebrews continued their route toward Mount Horeb, but on their arrival at Rephidim they raised fresh murmurs for want of water. Moses exerted himself to appease the tumult, and to inspire them with faith in that Adorable Being who had hitherto supplied their every want, but they only became more desperate, and even began to talk of stoning him to death. Hereupon he was compelled to apply to the Almighty, who immediately commanded him to lead the rebellious multitude to Mount Horeb, and to smite the rock with his miraculous rod, upon which such abundant streams of water should gush out as would be more than sufficient to allay their thirst. This injunction was instantly obeyed, and followed by the promised effect: and the place was called Massah and Meribah, or *tempting* and *contention*, on account of the murmurs of the ungrateful assembly.

About this time, Israel being attacked by the Amalekites, Moses was obliged to send his servant Joshua

with a suitable detachment against the enemy, whilst himself ascended a neighbouring eminence to take a view of the battle, and intercede with God for the victory. Here the Almighty paid a singular regard to the prayers of his servant, for whilst he held up his hands toward heaven Joshua prevailed, and when he let them down the Amalekites had the advantage. At length finding his arms wearied, Moses desired Aaron and Hur to hold them up on either side till the setting of the sun, when his petitions were fully granted, and Joshua obtained a decisive victory. In order to perpetuate this important transaction, and to encourage the Hebrews to fight against all the nations who might oppose their progress, Moses erected an altar, which he called Jehovah nissi, or "the Lord is my banner," intimating that God would assuredly crown the arms of his own people with conquest, and that he had commanded them to make war upon Amalek, from generation to generation, till his name were utterly blotted out from under heaven.

The defeat of the Amalekites opened a passage for Israel to mount Sinai, where their temporary residence was to be signalized by the promulgation of the divine law, and the appointment of various ceremonies and institutions that were afterward observed in the Jewish nation. Here also Moses received a visit from Jethro, Zipporah, and his two sons, and, at the instigation of the Midianitish priest, selected a certain number of elders to act as inferior judges among the Israelites, whose contentions and complaints had hitherto engrossed the chief of his attention, and even threatened to injure his health.

B. C. 1491. Shortly after this transaction, Jethro returned to the place of his nativity, and Moses having regulated the encampment in such a manner that a considerable space might be left between it and Mount Sinai, directed the Hebrews to sanctify themselves against the third day, which God had appointed for the promulgation of his decalogue.

On the appointed morning the whole assembly beheld the Mountain of Sinai enveloped with a thick cloud, whence issued forth such peals of thunder, and terrific flashes of lightning, as filled them with dread and amazement. At length, the sound of a trumpet having given the signal, Moses conducted the people to the barrier which he had fixed by divine direction, and went up, with his brother Aaron, into the midst of the cloud, while the posterity of Jacob gazed, in silent astonishment, on the interesting object before them, and felt the ground tremble beneath their feet. After some time the trumpet ceased to sound, the rattling thunder was hushed to silence, and the voice of God was distinctly heard from the midst of the fire and smoke, pronouncing the ten principal laws which were to be the foundation of all that should afterward be promulgated in the Jewish church.

Moses soon returned from the mountain, and was received with the utmost veneration by the congregated tribes, who, during his absence, had retired to a greater distance from the holy hill, and who now promised the most implicit obedience to the sacred law; but at the same time entreated that he would in future speak to them instead of the Deity, lest they should expire beneath those awful and indescribable emotions which had resulted from the awful sounds, that had just issued from the

clouds. The Hebrew chief commended their awe and humility ; and, having given them some consolatory assurances, went up again into the mountain, where the Almighty vouchsafed to add a few ceremonial institutions to the moral precepts of the decalogue, and graciously repeated his former blessings upon all who should prove obedient, declaring that they should surely enter the Land of Promise, and that they should gradually subdue its present idolatrous inhabitants, till their possessions should extend from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the desert unto the river.

Immediately after this communication, Moses erected an altar, and offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings to the God of his fathers. He also caused the contents of the holy covenant to be publicly read, and, after exacting a solemn promise for its fulfilment, he ratified it by sprinkling the altar, the book, and all the people, with the blood of the victims. At the end of this ceremony he caused twelve pillars to be raised, in token of God's sacred alliance with the twelve tribes ; and then conducted Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, with seventy of the Israelitish elders, to the foot of the mountain, where they were indulged with a vision of their Adorable Maker.

After some time, Moses committed the care of his people to Aaron and Hur, and went up with Joshua into the mountain, where he waited forty days, while God gave him the ten commandments on two tables of stone, together with the whole plan of the Jewish tabernacle, sacred utensils, sacerdotal robes, and mode of worship ; and commanded him to exact from the Israelites an offering of gold, silver, brass, scarlet, silk, wool,

oil, spices, and all other materials, according to their respective abilities.

Meanwhile, the Hebrews were so astonished at their leader's absence, that, after they had waited above a month, in expectation of his return, they gave him over for lost, and desired Aaron to make them some gods that might guide, and protect them in their future progress. Aaron readily acceded to this impious request, and, having desired them to bring him all their golden ornaments, formed a molten calf, in imitation of the Egyptian Apis, and, fixing it on a pedestal, exclaimed, "These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt !" He likewise erected an altar before the idol, and made proclamation that the next day should be held as a solemn festival, which was, accordingly, commenced with offering various sacrifices, and concluded with dancing and revelry.

Moses, having attended, for the space of forty days, to the divine injunctions of his Creator, was at length commanded to return to his people, who had, by the most shameful apostacy, forfeited that protection which alone could bring them into the Promised Land. "Get thee down," said the Almighty, "for thy people whom thou broughtest out of Egypt have corrupted themselves, and turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them : for they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and sacrificed thereunto, saying, "These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee out of Egypt." This assertion was immediately followed by a menace of the most alarming nature ; but Moses interceded so powerfully on behalf of the unthinking rebels, and urged so forcibly

the gracious promises which had been given to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that God* acceded to his request, and mitigated the punishment of the offenders.

The Hebrew chief now descended from the mountain, with the two tables of stone in his hands, but on his approaching the camp, and perceiving the Israelites dancing round the new object of their adoration, he was overwhelmed with concern and confusion, and, in the first transports of rage, broke the tables of the decalogue. He then upbraided his brother, in the severest terms, with having been accessory to the public crime, and immediately set himself about the destruction of the idol, which he caused to be burnt, pulverized, and thrown into the water, of which he compelled all the congregation to drink. During this transaction he cried with a loud voice, "Who is on the Lord's side?" and finding himself immediately joined by the tribe of Levi, he caused them to gird on their swords, and to slay indifferently all persons who still remained at the idolatrous feast, without regard to quality, friendship, or affinity. This command was instantly executed, and about three thousand individuals perished for their disobedience. But on the following day Moses went up again to the mountain, and renewed his supplications with such success, that the offended Deity not only

* As, on the one hand, we are told that God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent, and as, on the other, we read in this, and several other parts of the Old Testament, that God repented of the evil which he thought to do unto the people, it is proper to observe, that this expression was merely accommodated to the ideas of the Jews, the same as they were told of the sun and moon standing still, as will be seen in our account of Joshua's transactions.

pardoned the survivors, but renewed his former promise of leading them to the land of Canaan, under the immediate conduct of his angel. The pardon and promise, however, were both so far conditional, that the people should perform a public act of humiliation, as a proof of their repentance, and that they should behave with greater propriety in future ; for, in case of any relapse, they were assured that this crime would be remembered against them “ In the day when I visit,” said God, “ I will visit their sin upon them.”

In consequence of this intimation a solemn fast was held in the camp, during which the Hebrews laid aside all their costly raiment and personal ornaments, and went out (doubtless to confess their sins) to the tabernacle of the Lord, which Moses had removed* to a considerable distance from the camp. At the same time God vouchsafed to console his servant Moses with a sight of his glory, or of that angel (Jesus Christ) under whose protection the Israelites were to subdue their enemies, and eventually take possession of the Promised Land.

Moses, having tarried on the hill of Sinai forty days and nights, made two new tables like those which he had destroyed, and received some farther instructions from his Maker, came down again to the Israelites ; who observed, with astonishment, that his face had acquired such a peculiar lustre as incapacitated them from looking steadily upon him, till he had covered it

* This passage should remind us that man is removed, by sin, to a considerable distance from God ; and that this action of Moses was also figurative of the death of our Saviour, who offered himself for the sin of the world without or beyond the limits of the city of Jerusalem.

with a veil. He then desired the congregation to bring a voluntary offering of different materials for the holy tabernacle, utensils, pontifical garments, &c. and he was immediately supplied with a profusion of jewels, metals, ointments, perfumes, and every other requisite article, which he distributed to proper workmen and artificers, under the direction of Aholiab and Bezaleel, whom God had endowed with peculiar skill to contrive, and ability to execute the various designs that had been showed to Moses on the mountain. The work was, also, performed with such alacrity and diligence that, in less than six months the new tabernacle, with all its magnificent furniture and apparatus, was set up at the foot of Sinai, and the pompous worship of the Israelites was begun ; in the institution of which, consideration was chiefly had to showing the indispensable necessity of an atonement for every sin, and to shadow forth, in the strongest colours, the nature and effects of that great sacrifice which should be, afterwards, offered on Mount Calvary by the coequal son of God, for the redemption of a guilty world.

B. C. 1490. Aaron had not long enjoyed the high priesthood before his two sons, Nadab and Abihu were struck dead by fire from heaven, as a punishment for their having presumed to offer incense, in the tabernacle, with strange fire, contrary to the Divine injunction.

Israel, whose rebellious disposition had been manifested on so many occasions since their emancipation from Egyptian tyranny, were still so unmindful either of the mercies or the judgments of their God, that they daringly insulted both him and his servant Moses on the most trifling occasions, and consequently often incurred

the effects of Divine displeasure. Thus a general murmuring at Taberah, on account of a fatiguing march, occasioned the destruction of part of their camp by miraculous fire ; an insolent complaint against the manna, and a riotous demand for flesh, was followed by a dreadful disease which swept off prodigious numbers who were feasting on an abundant supply of quails ; and an insurrection which resulted from mere distrust and cowardice, at the report of some spies whom Moses had sent to examine the borders of Canaan, caused their offended Maker to affirm that none of them, except Joshua and Caleb, who were above twenty years old, should take possession of that fertile land ; but that they should rove about, from place to place, till their bodies should fall in the wilderness.

Notwithstanding this ungrateful conduct on the part of the Israelites, God continued, for the space of thirty nine years, to display his providence in the most conspicuous manner, forming and polishing the new generation for whom the Land of Promise was reserved. The fiery cloudy pillar still continued to direct their movements, the manna still descended for their daily consumption, and such was the Deity's care of his people, that their raiment remained uninjured, their shoes whole, and their feet unhurt, notwithstanding their long and frequent marches in the Arabian desert. And with respect to their rebellions they were so surely and immediately followed by an exemplary chastisement, that they could neither be flattered with hopes of impunity, nor countenanced by the number of offenders. A circumstance which seems to have been the chief cause of their zeal against the sabbath breaker, whom they

brought before Moses, and caused him to be stoned to death.

B. C. 1471. About this time a dangerous conspiracy was formed against Moses, by Korah, a descendant of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, two descendants of Reuben, who repined at the fortune of Aaron's family in being invested with the priesthood; and urged so many things against the ambition of Moses, that they soon engaged two hundred and fifty more Hebrews in their design. When they had thus secured a powerful party, Korah put himself at their head, and, confronting the Israelitish chiefs, began to upbraid them with engrossing all power civil and ecclesiastical, to the utter exclusion of the rest of the congregation, whom he asserted to be as holy as they. Moses was much surprised at this address, and boldly rebuked the malecontents for their presumption, but declined further debate, till the ensuing morning, when the Lord would declare openly in favour of that party which acted consistently with his own will. Moses then sent to desire a private conference with Dathan and Abiram, whom he supposed to have been inveigled into the conspiracy: but they positively refused their attendance, and even returned an insolent answer, in which they upbraided him with having decoyed the whole nation of Israel out of the fertile land of Egypt, under pretence of bringing them to a land that flowed with milk and honey, instead of which he detained them in the wilderness for the express purpose of making them greater slaves to his ambition. A charge so false and cruel, that Moses, on hearing it, lost his usual serenity of temper, and exclaimed, "Respect not thou, O Lord, their offering, for I have not taken even an ass from them, neither have I hurt one of them."

Early next morning, Moses and Aaron repaired to the tabernacle, whither Korah and his two hundred and fifty partisans came, soon afterward, each bearing a censer in his hand : and these were followed by a multitude of the Hebrews, who had assembled to be spectators on so interesting an occasion. The first objects that attracted their attention were the divine glory above the tabernacle, and a voice which commanded the high priest and legislator to withdraw themselves from among the rebellious congregation, lest they should be involved in the general ruin which was ready to overwhelm them : but Moses again undertook to make intercession for the people, and pleaded their cause so pathetically, that they were permitted to elude the threatened vengeance by retiring to a distance from the conspirators. When the crowd had separated themselves from these men, according to the direction of their Heavenly Patron, Moses publicly declared, that if the ringleaders of the rebellion died a common death he would suffer his divine mission to be disputed ; but that if the earth immediately opened and swallowed them up, then he should expect the congregation would acknowledge the impiety of those who had so audaciously provoked the Lord to wrath. He had scarcely uttered these words before the families of the conspirators were buried alive by a partial earthquake, and the two hundred and fifty men who stood with their censers before the tabernacle, were utterly consumed by a supernatural fire* that is said to have come out from the presence of the Lord.

* To perpetuate the recollection of this transaction, the brazen censers of Korah and his companions were taken out of the fire, and beaten into broad plates for a covering of the altar.

Notwithstanding this awful proof of Divine indignation, and the consternation which induced the astonished tribes to exclaim, "let us flee, lest the earth swallow us up also," the congregation soon renewed their murmurs, and basely accused Moses and Aaron of having murdered the people of the Lord. Hereupon the Hebrew chiefs ran to the tabernacle, and Moses, perceiving that some dreadful judgment was about to fall on the rioters, urged his brother to take his censer and make an atonement with all possible dispatch ; but, though Aaron exerted himself as quickly as possible, a pestilence had already begun, and raged so furiously that fourteen thousand and seven hundred individuals had already been swept to an untimely grave, besides those that had perished in Korah's rebellion ; the high priest, however, continued his kind office, and, by standing between the dead and the living, at length effected his design. Upon this occasion, God vouchsafed to give a new and convincing confirmation of Aaron's authority ; for Aaron on the one side, and the head of every tribe, on the other, having written their names upon so many almond rods, and deposited them in the tabernacle, it appeared, next morning, that all of them remained unchanged except that of the high priest, which had budded and brought forth leaves and ripe almonds. Accordingly Moses exhibited them to the congregation, and that which had undergone so extraordinary a change was carefully placed in the ark, as a testimony to future ages, of God's appointment, and of Israel's aptitude to rebel against their Maker. From this day, likewise, all the people of Israel, except the descendants of Aaron, were prohibited from entering the tabernacle under pain of death.

B. C. After the Israelites had wandered about the 1453. desert of Arabia Petræa for near thirty years, and near thirty nine were elapsed since their release from the house of bondage, they removed from Ezion-Gaber toward Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, where a fresh insurrection was excited by a temporary want of water, and Moses was commanded to bring them a seasonable supply, by smiting an adjacent rock ; but, either out of impatience at the murmurs of the assembly, or from some secret cause, he smote the rock *twice* with his rod, and exclaimed, "Hear now ye rebels, must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?" For this intemperate deportment and these expressions, which were both indecent in themselves and derogatory to the honor of the Almighty, God excluded him from entering the Land of Promise, and condemned him to die in the wilderness.

Shortly after this occurrence, Moses sent a deputation to the king of Edom, reminding him of the severe afflictions which the Israelites had sustained in Egypt, and requesting permission to pass through his dominions in their way to Canaan. The royal Edomite, however, peremptorily refused his consent, and Israel, being either unwilling to take up arms against their brethren, or commanded to avoid hostilities, turned aside, and continued their march toward mount Hor ; where Moses was commanded to conduct Aaron and his son Eleazar to the summit of the hill, and to invest the latter with the sacerdotal robes. This ceremony was no sooner performed, than Aaron resigned his soul into the hands of his Creator, in the hundred and twenty third year of his age, and his remains were interred on the

spot ; but the place was kept* so private that none of the inhabitants of that country could ever discover it. The children of Israel devoted seventy days to mourning ; and Eleazar succeeded his deceased father in the high priesthood.

About this time the Israelites attempted to enter Canaan by the narrow passes called the “ Way of the Spies ;” but a Canaanitish prince, called Arad, overthrew them in battle, and took several prisoners. Hereupon they solemnly vowed to destroy all the cities of Arad, on condition that God would crown their arms with success, and, soon afterward, they renewed the attack with such success, that the king was utterly defeated, and all his towns were rased to the ground ; in consequence of which the field of battle was called Hormah, or utter destruction, though the reduction of the country did not take place till some time after the death of Moses.

From mount Hor the congregation journeyed along the coast of the Red Sea, to compass Idumea ; but the united inconveniences of a fatiguing march, and a scarcity of provision, induced them to murmur so loudly against their conductor, that the Deity sent a prodigious number of fiery serpents into the camp, which destroyed many of the people, and alarmed the survivors so effectually, that they voluntarily acknowledged their transgression, and humbly requested Moses to intercede with God on their behalf. Accordingly the Hebrew legislator offered up his prayers for their pres-

* Had not the Divine wisdom taken this precaution both on this occasion and at the death of Moses, the Hebrew high-priest and legislator would assuredly have received divine honors, in future ages, from a people so prone to idolatry.

ervation, and God commanded him to make a brazen serpent of the same figure as those that infested them, and to set it on a pole, that as many as were bitten might look upon it and be healed.*

B. C. Being happily delivered from this plague, the 1452. Israelites removed to Oboth, and thence to Ijeabarim, which, being situated in that part of the wilderness which lies over against the land of Moab eastward, is called the desert of Moab. As they were, afterward, removing to pass the valley of Zared, God forbade them to commit any hostilities against Moab and Ammon, because he had given the land which those nations enjoyed, for a peaceable possession. The Hebrews were therefore obliged to take a considerable compass round the country ; but, after some time, they arrived at Bamoth Arnon, or the high places of Arnon, and formed an encampment at the foot of Mount Pisgah.

After several marches between Moabitis and the land of Ammon, the Hebrews came, at length, to the country of the Amorites, and sent to request permission to pass through in their journey to Canaan ; but, Sihon, king of Heshbon, having refused to admit them into his dominions upon any consideration, a battle ensued, which terminated in his death, and the utter subversion

* We would earnestly desire our readers to recollect that this serpent was not merely set up for a remedy to the existing evil, but as a glorious type of JESUS CHRIST, who, in the days of his incarnation, told Nicodemus that “ as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” See the gospel of St. John, chap. iii. verses 14, 15.

of his kingdom : for the Israelites, having seized all the country from the brook of Arnon unto that of Jabbok, massacred all the inhabitants without distinction. Og, the king of Bashan attempted, soon after this transaction, to arrest the progress of Israel's victories ; but he, like Sihon, was soon despoiled both of his dominions and his life.

After these exploits, the Hebrews resumed their journey, and proceeded to the plains of Moab, which were situated on this side Jordan, by Jericho. Whilst they were encamped in this place, Balak, king of the Moabites, began to regard them with a jealous eye, and formed a strong alliance with the Midianites and Ammonites, in order to retard their progress : but previously to declaring hostilities, he resolved to try how far the power of enchantment might operate against the objects of his mingled dread and envy. Accordingly he dispatched messengers to Pethor, in quest of a famous diviner, called Balaam, earnestly requesting that he would come to court with all possible haste, and curse the numerous host which had given such cause of uneasiness to the king and his allies. Balaam desired the messengers to remain at his house that night, in order that he might inquire of God whether he should comply with their master's desire ; but, being warned not to undertake the journey, nor to presume to curse the especial favourites of Heaven, he told them next morning that the Lord had refused his permission, and so dismissed them.

Balak was much disappointed at this answer ; but still resolved to gain the accomplishment of his wish, and sent a fresh deputation, consisting of persons of distinguished quality, who might possibly allure the

prophet by promises of preferment, and an ample remuneration. To their splendid offers Balaam replied, that if the king would give him his house full of silver and gold, he durst not transgress the command of the Almighty. However, being anxious to gratify them, he consulted the Deity once more, and obtained permission to go, on condition that he said nothing inconsistent with the decrees of Providence. Hereupon he rose early in the morning, and set out, with the Moabitish nobles ; but it seems that he either designed to *violate* the Divine injunction, or pleased himself with the hope of *eluding* it, and thus obtaining the favour of Balak : for his progress was soon impeded by an angel, who with a drawn sword, terrified the ass on which the diviner rode, and caused her to turn three times out of the way. Balaam, not perceiving the celestial opponent, was greatly irritated at the supposed stubbornness of his beast, and struck her repeatedly with his staff : but the Lord miraculously opened the animal's mouth, and caused her to expostulate with her master on his unmerited severity. The prophet, however, paid no attention to this prodigy, till perceiving the angel, he was convinced of his error, and prostrated himself on the ground, exclaiming, " I have sinned ; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me : now, therefore, if it displease thee, I will go back again." This proposal, however, was rejected, and Balaam was permitted to proceed, after receiving a fresh injunction to say nothing more than God himself should dictate.

Balak, hearing of the prophet's arrival, went out to meet him in one of the frontier cities of his kingdom, and took him thence to Kirjathhazoth, where he offered a sacrifice of sheep and oxen, and introduced his

guest to all the princes of Midian. Next morning he conducted him to the high places of Baal on Mount Abarim, whence he might have an entire prospect of the Israelitish camp ; and there the king built seven altars, and offered a bullock and a ram upon each altar, a ceremony which was afterward repeated in two other places. But as Balaam was utterly disappointed in seeking for enchantments that might enable him to fulfil his employer's request, and as he was positively commanded to utter a benediction instead of a curse, he confessed at the third time of offering the sacrifice, that no enchantment could prevail against Jacob, nor any divination against Israel, and pronounced an emphatic blessing on Israel, saying, " Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee." The king, enraged at this frustration of his hopes, commanded the prophet to retire immediately from his dominions, and Balaam returned home : but it appears that, previously to his departure, he advised the Moabites and Midianites to entice the Hebrews to idolatry : for we read that the tribes of Jacob were, shortly afterward, invited to the idolatrous sacrifices, and allured to the most unpardonable practices by the Moabitish women, so that, at last, they introduced their fair deluders into the camp, and abandoned themselves to such incontinence, that God sent a pestilence among them, which swept off about twenty four thousand individuals ; and Moses was commanded to try and hang all the heads of the people who had countenanced this defection. Notwithstanding the awful effects of the plague, the execution of the command given to Moses, and the consternation which now began to overwhelm the generality of the survivors, a chief of the tribe of Simeon, named Zimri,

had the unparalleled audacity to bring a Midianitish female into the camp, and to lead her, in sight of the whole congregation, toward his tent. His presumption, however, was soon punished : for Phinehas, son of Eleazar the high priest, followed the idolatrous pair, and with a javelin thrust them through their bodies ; for which act of pious zeal God confirmed the priesthood to the posterity of Phinehas, and the plague was immediately stayed.

Some time after this defection, God commanded Moses to take an account of all the Israelites that were able to bear arms, from twenty years old and upward, whom he, accordingly, found to amount to six hundred and one thousand seven hundred and thirty, exclusive of the Levites, who being numbered from one month and upward, amounted to twenty three thousand. This account was taken in the plains of Moab ; and it appears that the recent pestilence made an entire end of the rebellious generation, which had been excluded from entering the Land of Promise ; for, on examination, there was not one of them found, except Joshua and Caleb, who had been exempted from the sentence that was pronounced against the murmuring assembly in the wilderness of Seir : “ The Lord,” says the inspired penman, “ had said of them, They shall surely die in the wilderness. And there was not left a man of them save Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun.”

Shortly after this transaction, Moses was commanded to ascend Mount Nebo, which is a part of the long ridge called Abarim, and take a view of the delightful country from which he was excluded, on account of his improper conduct in the desert of Zin ; and he was

also, given to understand that he should die very soon in this mountain. The Jewish legislator obeyed his Maker's injunction, and, without testifying the least surprise or dread, at the intimation of his approaching dissolution, he earnestly requested that a successor might be appointed to guide and direct the Israelites in their further progress ; that the sacred congregation might not become like a flock of sheep having no shepherd. To this petition the Deity replied, by commanding him to set Joshua, the son of Nun, before the high priest and all the assembly of Israel, and to invest him, in the most public manner, with ample authority. And Moses took the earliest opportunity of setting this favourite of Heaven apart, by the imposition of his own hands, and with the general consent of the people, as head and general of the twelve tribes who were about to take possession of that good land, which their fathers had forfeited by disobedience.

After Moses had instructed the people in several ceremonial institutes and regulations, he received a command from the Almighty to avenge the Israelites on the people of Midian, who, as we have already observed, occasioned a gross and fatal defection after Balaam had exerted himself in vain to involve them in a general curse. Accordingly, a detachment, consisting of twelve thousand men, was sent against the enemy ; and God crowned their exertions with such brilliant success, that five Midianitish princes were slain by the sword ; their cities were reduced to ashes ; the male inhabitants, among whom was the prophet Balaam, were all slaughtered without distinction ; the women and children were taken captive ; and the victors returned to Moses

with an immense booty, one half of which they received as the due reward of their valour ; a fiftieth part was given to the Levites ; and the remainder was distributed among such of the people as had remained with their venerable lawgiver. It must likewise be observed, that the people were so grateful for the safe return of all their brethren who had gone upon this expedition, that they voluntarily presented to the Lord an offering of the gold chains, earrings and bracelets, which they had taken, amounting to the weight of sixteen thousand seven hundred and fifty shekels, which were immediately deposited, by Eleazar, in the tabernacle.

B. C. As the Israelites were now on the eve of entering into Canaan, Moses appointed the limits of the country which they were to conquer, and the distribution of it to the twelve tribes, by lot, under the care of Joshua and Eleazar. He also allotted forty-eight cities to the Levites, with this stipulation, that six of them should be cities of refuge for the man slayer ; and desired the people to marry in their own tribes, in order to avoid the inconvenience of the inheritance of daughters. He then recapitulated all that had happened to the sons of Jacob since their departure out of Egypt ; directed Joshua and the elders to erect a capacious altar upon Mount Ebal, upon which they should write all the Divine laws ; desired them to set up the blessings and curses, in sight of all Israel, upon the mountains Ebal and Gerizzem ; and composed a song or canticle, to be learned by the Hebrew nation and their posterity.

Having thus fulfilled his last public duties, delivered a duplicate of the law to be preserved in the ark, and pronounced a prophetic blessing to his people, Moses

ascended Mount Nebo, according to the direction of his Creator, and there expired in the hundred and twentieth year of his age. We are likewise told, that the Lord conveyed his body into a certain valley in the land of Moab, and buried it so privately that no person could ever discover the spot of his sepulture.

B C After the Israelites had mourned, an entire
1451. month, for the loss of their venerable legislator, Joshua their new general, received a command to cross the Jordan, and to take possession of that good land which was destined for their inheritance. Accordingly he sent two prudent persons to examine Jericho, and to procure the best intelligence respecting the natural and political strength of the country which they were about to attack. These spies, having crossed the river, obtained a lodging at the house of a woman called Rahab ; but, their arrival being notified to the king of Jericho, they were immediately ordered to be arrested, and would indisputably have fallen into the enemy's hands, had not their hostess generously concealed them under some stalks of flax, and, afterward, let them down by a rope from one of her back windows, which overlooked the city wall. To reward this act of kindness, they promised that both Rahab and her family should be exempted from the general destruction which would soon overwhelm the city ; and, having desired her to suspend a scarlet line from her window, to remind them of this assurance, they retired to the mountains for three days, to elude the search of the king's officers, and then returned to Joshua with an account of their expedition.

The universal consternation which appeared to pervade every part of the Canaanitish nations ; and caus-

ed Rahab to acknowledge “ Your terror is fallen upon us, and all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you,” inspired Joshua with fresh courage, and enlivened the people with the hope of speedily obtaining the result of their long and ardent expectations.

A proclamation was accordingly, issued out for the removal of the camp ; and, on the morrow, the Lord magnified himself, according to his promise, among the sacred tribes : for the priests, who marched at the head of the multitude, bearing the ark of the covenant, had no sooner advanced to the brink of Jordan than the waters divided, as on a former occasion at the Red Sea, and afforded an easy passage to the people. During the time of their passing, the priests remained in the midst of the river with the sacred symbol of the divine presence, and Joshua, to perpetuate the memory of this interesting circumstance, caused twelve large stones to be laid upon each other on the spot where the ark rested ; and commanded that twelve other stones should be taken from the bottom of the river to erect a monument on the Canaanitish shore.

These orders being executed, Joshua left the river to resume its usual course, and pursued his march to Gilgal, in the plains of Jericho, where the rite of circumcision, which had been omitted during the peregrinations of Israel in the wilderness, was renewed ; and where the general, during the celebration of the passover, received particular instructions from an angel of God respecting the siege of Jericho.

Pursuant to these directions, Joshua commanded the priests to take up the ark, and carry it in procession round the city, preceded by seven men of the sacerdotal order, bearing each a trumpet of ram's horn

In his hand, and accompanied by all the warriors ; but they were expressly forbidden either to shout or speak till the day when they were commanded. These injunctions were immediately fulfilled, and repeated with the same silence and decorum for six days ; but on the seventh day they marched round the city seven times, and at the seventh time the priests sounded their trumpets, and the people raised a general shout ; upon which the walls of Jericho instantly fell to the ground, and the idolatrous inhabitants became an easy prey : for no sooner were Rahab and her family conveyed to a place of safety, than the Israelites massacred all the men, women, and children, that they found, together with all the cattle. They also reduced the buildings to ashes, after depositing all the gold, silver, &c. in the sacred treasury ; and Joshua pronounced a heavy curse against the man who should ever presume to rebuild a place which the Lord had devoted to destruction.

After this important conquest, Joshua sent a detachment of three thousand men against the king of Ai, a little state about ten miles distant from Jericho ; but they were unexpectedly repulsed, and compelled to retire with the loss of thirty six men. This accident cast such a damp upon the people, that Joshua was compelled to have recourse to the Almighty, who answered him, by * urim, that a sacrilege had been committed,

* The ordinance of consulting the urim and thummim was performed with great ceremony. The high priest, drest in his pontifical vestments and breastplate, went into the holy place, and turned his face toward the sanctum sanctorum, or holy of holies, whilst he inquired of the Lord ; but how the Divine oracle gave its answer, none of the learned, Jews nor

and ordered him to discover the delinquent, that he might be punished with death. Accordingly lots were cast upon the tribes and families, and Achan, of the tribe of Judah, was found to be the cause of the recent calamity. Hereupon he confessed that he had concealed some of the plunder of Jericho, and his crime being verified by an immediate search, he was conveyed into an adjacent valley and stoned to death : in memory of which occurrence a monument of stones was erected, and the valley was, ever after, designated by the name of Achor, or trouble.

Having, by this execution, freed the people from condemnation, Joshua led a more formidable army against Ai, and prudently stationed a party of five thousand men, as an ambush, behind the city. On his near approach he was attacked by the men of Ai, and immediately faced about ; a movement which inspired the king with the warmest hopes, and induced him to order every man to leave the city and join in the pursuit. The town, being thus left defenceless, was instantly entered and set on fire by the Hebrew ambuscade, and while its smoke ascended to heaven the politic fugitives stopped short, and attacked their pursuers ; who, finding themselves completely hemmed in on every side, soon lost their courage, and were all cut to pieces except their unfortunate prince, who was taken captive and sentenced to be hanged. The city also was reduced to ashes, and all its inhabitants were massacred without distinction.

Christians, have ever been able to determine. It certainly did not continue any longer than the tabernacle ; for we find no mention of its being consulted subsequent to the building of Solomon's temple.

The fatal catastrophe of Jericho and Ai alarmed all the neighbouring kingdoms, and induced most of their sovereigns to form an alliance against the common enemy. The people of Gibeon, however, thought proper to elude the impending danger by stratagem, and accordingly sent ambassadors to Joshua, desiring his friendship, and deprecating that wrath which had been already so severely felt in Canaan. These men, having received their instructions, arrived at the Israelitish camp with tattered garments, old clouted shoes, and mouldy bread ; and affirmed that they had come from a distant country to pay their homage to, and request a league of amity with the people whom God had blessed in so extraordinary a manner. These professions, together with their wretched appearance, convinced Joshua that they were really natives of a distant land, and, under that idea, he concluded a league with them, without asking counsel of the Lord. However, at the expiration of three days, the artifice was discovered ; and the deceitful Gibeonites, though secured from extirpation, were sentenced to become hewers of wood and drawers of water to their new allies.

Adonizedek, king of Jerusalem, was no sooner apprized of this circumstance, than he resolved to make an example of the cowardly Gibeonites, and accordingly led his forces, with those of four other kings, against their capital city, which was both stronger and more considerable than Ai, but which could not be supposed to resist so formidable a host of besiegers. In this exigence, therefore, the inhabitants applied for succour to Joshua, who generously hastened to their relief, and compelled the royal confederates to retire with precipitation. As they were fleeing in the utmost disorder,

and had almost reached Beth Horon, there fell a shower of hailstones of such an enormous size, that they did greater execution than the swords of the Hebrews. As, however, it was probable that many might escape in the general dispersion, Joshua commanded the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon, till the victory should be complete, and God vouchsafed to prolong the light of the day for that purpose.*

The success which attended Israel, and the miracle which God wrought for the destruction of his enemies, effectually destroyed the hopes of the five kings, and induced them to take refuge in a solitary cave near the city of Makkedah : but their retreat being discovered, the mouth of their cave was stopped up till the victors returned from the pursuit, when they were dragged out and trodden under foot by the chiefs of Israel : they were, afterward, put to death, and hung upon five trees, till the setting of the sun, when their bodies were again thrown into the cave, and several large stones were collected on the spot, as a monument of their tragical end.

The destruction of these confederates, together with that of Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron and Debir, and the fate of Horam, king of Gezer, who had attempted to defend Lachish, induced Jabin, king of

* It must be observed, that the Israelites were totally ignorant of astronomy, and therefore the inspired historian adapted this relation to their ideas. And it may be further remarked, that if such a circumstance occurred in England, the only mode of explaining it to the commonalty would be that which is here adopted ; as but few out of the multitude would have any conception of the *earth* being stopped in a rotation which they never perceived.

Azor to make a bold attempt against Israel, with the assistance of all the Canaanitish forces. Accordingly he sent to the kings of Madon, Shimron, and Achshaph; to the princes on the north of the mountains; to those in the southern plains near Cinneroth, and in the valley, and on the frontiers of Dor on the west; to the Canaanites, peculiarly so called, on the east; and to the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, and Jebusites, all of whom confederated together against Israel, and composed an army which the inspired historian compares, in point of numbers, to the sand on the sea shore. But, whilst they were encamped by the waters of Merom, they were suddenly attacked by Joshua, and thrown into such confusion, that they evacuated their tents with the utmost precipitation, and fled towards Zidon the Great, Miruphoth Maim, and the valley of Mizpeh, whither they were pursued and cut to pieces by the Israelites. Their horses also were disabled, their chariots of war burnt, and Hazor itself, which had been reckoned the head of the kingdoms, was, soon afterward, taken and burnt to the ground. The rest of the cities belonging to the confederate princes were permitted to stand, but their inhabitants were involved in a general destruction.

After the Canaanites had been successively defeated and dispersed by the victorious tribes of Israel, Joshua led his valiant followers against a fierce and barbarous race, called Anakims, who inhabited the mountainous parts of the country, and who have been described, by Josephus, as men of a dreadful aspect and gigantic stature. The arms of Israel, however, were crowned with the usual success, and the sons of Anak were vanquished with such dreadful slaughter, that they were

entirely cut off from Hebron, Debir, Anab, and all the adjacent mountains, and none of them remained in the land except in the cities of Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod.

Thus, after an obstinate conflict of near seven years, was Canaan reduced by the Israelites, according to the promise of the Almighty ; Joshua divided the new inheritance, by lot, among the twelve tribes, in compliance with the injunctions of his pious predecessor ; and, in the words of the inspired penman, “ the land rested from war.”

CHAPTER V.

From the Conquest of Canaan, by the Israelites, to the Commencement of their monarchical Government.

THE interval of peace which followed the distribution of the recent conquests was employed by Joshua in appointing the cities of refuge, which he had been commanded to set apart for the priests and Levites, and for the protection of such persons as had accidentally, or without an evil design, embued their hands in the blood of a fellow creature. He also caused the two tribes and a half, which had received an inheritance on the other side Jordan, but had kindly assisted their brethren in the reduction of Canaan, to be honourably dismissed by the chiefs of the congregation.

These Israelites, previously to their crossing the river, erected an altar of an extraordinary size, in token of their relationship to the other tribes, and, as a monument of the wonders that God had wrought during their abode in Canaan. Their design, however, was so grossly mistaken by Joshua and his followers, that they held an assembly at Shiloh on the occasion, and, after some consideration, resolved to commence a sanguinary war against them for their imaginary crime of apostacy : but on the remonstrances of Phinehas and several other chiefs, whom the general sent to investigate the business, an answer was returned which obviated this intention, and gave universal satisfaction.

Joshua appears to have governed the Israelites peaceably for about seventeen years after this occurrence; and at the expiration of that time he caused all the heads of the people to assemble at Shechem, in order to listen to his last injunctions, and to make a solemn renewal of their covenant with the God of their fathers. He briefly recapitulated the transactions of God with their nation; reminded them of the fulfilment of those gracious promises which had been first made to Abraham, and frequently repeated to his descendants; and earnestly exhorted them to evince the sincerity of their gratitude by the zeal and regularity of their worship: at the same time warning them of the direful consequences which would assuredly overtake them for perverseness or defection. He then made a solemn covenant with the congregation that they should put away all strange gods, and direct their adoration solely to the Lord; and, having erected a stone monument near the sanctuary, he exclaimed "This stone shall be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." This ceremony being performed, and the vows of the Hebrews carefully registered in the book of the law, Joshua retired from the concerns of the world, and died, soon after, in the hundred and tenth year of his age: his remains were buried in the border of his own inheritance in Timnath Serah.

The death of this able commander was soon followed by that of the high priest Eleazer, who was buried on a hill belonging to his son and successor Phinehas: and, about the same time, the body of Joseph, which had been brought out of Egypt by the Israelites, was interred, with due solemnity, in a piece of ground which the patriarch Jacob had purchased of the Shechemites for

a hundred pieces of silver, and which was now given, by lot, to the tribe of Joseph.

Notwithstanding the brilliant and repeated victories which had put the children of Israel in possession of Canaan, it appears that, at the time of Joshua's death, the Philistine satrapies and several other parts of the country remained unconquered. It was therefore deemed expedient to inquire of the Lord respecting the choice of a tribe to begin the war ; and the Divine oracle immediately appointed Judah for that purpose. Accordingly Caleb, the son of Juphunneh, put himself at the head of his tribe, and, with the assistance of that of Simeon, made an expedition against the Canaanites, which proved so successful, that Adonibezek, king of Bezek, was taken prisoner and deprived of his thumbs and great toes as a suitable* punishment for a man of so cruel a disposition ; Jerusalem, then inhabited by the Jebusites, was pillaged and burnt, while the astonished garrison took shelter in the fortress of Zion ; the gigantic descendants of Anak were obliged to screen themselves from destruction in the strong cities of Kirjath Sepher and Hebron ; and the important satrapies of Ekron, Gaza, and Askelon, were soon reduced by an army which fought under the immediate protection of their God. Kirjath Sepher was, also, soon annexed to the new acquisitions of Israel : for, Caleb having promised his daughter as a reward to the man who should take it, Othniel the son of Kenaz undertook the dangerous enterprise, and received the due reward of his exalted merit.

* This monarch had, according to his own confession, caused the thumbs and great toes of seventy kings, prisoners of war, to be amputated ; and obliged them to receive their food, like dogs, under his table.

Whilst Caleb, Othniel, and their valiant adherents, were exerting themselves for the security and aggrandizement of their nation, the other tribes neglected the express injunction of their legislator relative to the extirpation of their enemies ; and instead of cutting off the old inhabitants, as God had commanded, they contented themselves with laying them under tribute ; and after some time, were so imprudent as to intermarry with their families, and to provoke the vengeance of their Maker by various idolatrous practices, which involved them in many difficulties, and gave their foes an opportunity of regaining their liberty, and of taking an ample revenge for all their former losses.

B. C. During this period of confusion and apostacy, 1412. Micah,* a wealthy man of the tribe of Ephraim, restored to his mother eleven hundred pieces of silver which he had seized ; and the woman was so transported with joy at the recovery of her property, that she immediately determined to expend the greatest part of it in what she deemed a religious use, and one that might possibly prove an equivalent blessing to those curses which, in her anger, she had vented against the author of her loss. Accordingly she caused two idols to be made, which, together with an ephod and teraphim, were placed in a particular part of the house, thence called an " house of gods." Micah's son was also consecrated as priest to the family : but after some time his office was transferred to an indigent young Levite.

* This and the following circumstance, though postponed till the latter end of the book of Judges, certainly happened at the above mentioned period, as we are told that the people had then no king (or judge) but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Meanwhile the Danites, finding themselves straitened for want of room, resolved to seek a new habitation ; and accordingly sent out some spies, who, passing Micah's house, consulted the Levite concerning their success, and were so much encouraged by his answer that they went immediately to Laish, a town of considerable importance, but at that time inhabited by a rich and supine people who lived in the most careless security, without either magistrate, soldiery or other means of defence. Having taken a survey of this place, they hastened back to their employers with an accurate description of its wealth and defenceless situation ; upon which the Danites of Zorah and Eshtaol armed six hundred of their men, and marched immediately toward Laish : but on hearing that Micah had in his possession certain idols, and a priest of the tribe of Levi, they halted at Mount Ephraim, and, having forcibly taken the images, ephod, and teraphim from Micah's house, they obliged the young priest to attend them on their expedition. Micah followed them as hastily as possible, and complained bitterly that they had robbed him of every thing that was valuable ; but the only answer he received was, that his outcries might probably cost him his life, and therefore it would be advisable for him to return home peaceably. Micah, having no alternative, was forced to submit to his grievous loss ; and the predatory Danites proceeded to Laish, which they burnt to the ground, and raised a new city upon its site, which they called Dan, after the name of their progenitor. There, also, they set up the idols which they had taken from Mount Ephraim, and young Jonathan was retained as the priest of their new gods.

B. C. 1406. About six years after this transaction, the inhabitants of Gibeah. in the tribe of Benjamin, committed such a dreadful outrage against an itinerant Levite and his unfortunate concubine, that every one who heard the tale was struck with horror, and all the other Israelites determined to inflict an adequate chastisement upon the delinquents. Accordingly they sent deputies to demand the delivery of the Gibeathites ; but their message being treated with contempt, they vowed to take a severer revenge on the whole tribe of Benjamin ; and Judah, after being twice repulsed, obtained a decisive victory over their apostate brethren, of whom twenty five thousand were put to the sword, and six hundred were compelled to take shelter among the lofty rocks of Rimmon.

The resentment of the conquerors was not appeased by this effusion of blood : but they burnt down all the neighbouring cities and villages, and massacred the inhabitants without pity or distinction, till, at length, they imagined that they had utterly extirpated one of their tribes ; and that supposition overwhelmed them with remorse and consternation. On hearing however, that six hundred individuals had escaped the slaughter, they conceived an ardent wish for their restoration, and, after some consideration, adopted the following expedient. They caused a strict inquiry to be made concerning the tribes that had assembled at Mizpeh ; and on finding that the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead, belonging to the half tribe of Manasseh, on the other side Jordan, had not attended the general summons, they sent a detachment of twelve thousand men to destroy all whom they should find in that city except the virgins, of whom four hundred were taken captive, and given to as many of

the Benjamites. But as, notwithstanding the execution of this project, two hundred men were still unprovided with wives, they were instructed to lay in ambush among the vineyards of Shiloh, where several young damsels were expected to dance, at the celebration of a festival, and to carry off such as excited their admiration. By these means the tribe of Benjamin was soon restored to its former strength, and, ever afterward, continued closely attached to that of Judah.

B. C. The first chastisement which the Israelites
1405. received for their apostacy and licentiousness, appears to have been inflicted by Cuchan Rishathaim, king of Mesopotamia, who kept them under subjection for the space of eight years : but, at the expiration of that time, the valiant Othniel overthrew the idolatrous oppressor, and obtained such important advantages on behalf of his own nation as produced a peace of forty years duration.

B. C. Soon after the demise of this Hebrew judge
1325. and warrior, Israel was again brought into thralldom by the descendants of Moab, and groaned beneath their yoke for about eighteen years. However, Ehud, their second judge, being sent with a present to the Moabitish king, seized the opportunity of assassinating the tyrant, and of giving freedom to his unhappy brethren.

B. C. Shamgar, the third Israelitish judge, appears
1304. to have delivered his people from some oppression which they suffered under the Philistines : but the inspired historian has given us no further account of him than that he slew six hundred of his enemies with an ox goad.

Upon the decease of this personage, the Israelites proved so forgetful of their Maker, and so unmindful of his holy commands, that their defection was punished with exemplary rigor by a cruel servitude, which they were brought into by Jabin, king of Canaan, whose strength, besides a powerful army, and a valiant general, consisted in a prodigious number of iron chariots. At length, however, the groaning objects of his tyranny were brought to repentance ; and their supplications for the Divine assistance were crowned with such success, that two women were immediately raised up as the chief instruments of their deliverance, and a glorious victory was gained, which procured another respite of forty years continuance : for the Israelites, being encouraged by their prophetess, Deborah, assembled, in arms, to the number of ten thousand men ; and Sisera, the Canaanitish general, was pursued with great slaughter to the gates of Harosheth of the Gentiles, where he quitted his chariot, and, fleeing on foot, took refuge in the tent of Heber the Kenite. Jael, Heber's wife, received him with apparent cordiality ; presented him with a bowl of milk, instead of water which he had requested ; and covered him with a mantle, as if to secure him from the observation of intruders : but, on perceiving him to be suddenly overcome with sleep, she took a hammer, and drove a large nail into his temples ; thus terminating his life, and the glory of his master.

Notwithstanding these signal and repeated deliverances, the Israelites still proved ungrateful, and, by their aptitude to idolatry, provoked their God to afflict them with fresh calamities. Accordingly they were brought

under subjection by an enemy who deprived them of the privilege of retaining their own judges ; ravaged their land with unremitting cruelty ; expelled them from their habitations ; and even obliged them to flee, for personal safety, to the clefts and caverns of the mountains.

Whilst the affairs of Israel were in this deplorable situation, the Supreme Being vouchsafed to listen to their complaints, and graciously determined to effect their deliverance. Accordingly, an angel was sent to Gideon, to salute him with the title of Saviour of his people, and to assure him that the sons of Jacob should soon be emancipated from their distress by his instrumentality, Gideon was too well acquainted with the extreme wretchedness of his nation, to suppose that such an important revolution could be effected by any human being ; and therefore seemed to doubt the veracity of the angel's assertions. However, on his preparing a sacrifice, the celestial messenger caused it to be instantly consumed by supernatural fire, and vanished from the sight of the astonished Hebrew, who immediately erected an altar on the spot, which he called Jehovah Shalom. The same night he commenced his pious task with the demolition of the grove and altar of Baal, and with the sacrifice of a bullock in the place where the Israelites had, for a considerable time, worshipped the idol of their enslavers. These transactions gave such umbrage to the citizens that they assembled next morning at the house of Joash, Gideon's father, and demanded that the offender should expiate his crime by death : but the old man frustrated their design, and made them sensible of their absurdity in professing such zeal for a deity who was too impotent to prevent the destruction of his own altar.

Shortly after this occurrence, Gideon received a fresh * assurance that he should, with the assistance of a handful of men, gain a decisive victory over the formidable armies of the enemy ; and, to convince the Israelites of their folly and ingratitude in ever trusting to an arm of flesh, God commanded that all who were faint hearted should be disbanded ; and that the remainder should be conducted to the water side, where those who kneeled down to drink should be rejected, and those who lapped the water out of their hands should be reserved for the intended expedition. Accordingly this trial was made, and three hundred men, who alone remained out of thirty two thousand, were encouraged with an assurance of victory.

At this juncture, while Zebah, Zalmunna, and their powerful confederates, lay in their encampment in the valley of Jezreel, Gideon explored their camp ; and, on overhearing a Midianitish soldier relate a dream which clearly prefigured the success of Israel, he resolved to execute a stratagem which he had formed for the destruction of his enemy. Accordingly, having given a ram's horn and a light concealed in a pitcher to each of his three hundred followers, he led them about midnight against the Midianites ; who, being suddenly awakened by the sound of the horns, and dazzled by the hundred lights that broke in upon them from three sides of their

* Gideon, being doubtful of success, notwithstanding the assurances of the Almighty, earnestly requested that a miracle might be wrought for the confirmation of his faith. Accordingly a fleece of wool which he had spread on the ground was covered with dew, whilst the earth around it was perfectly dry ; and, on the next night, the fleece was perfectly dry, while the ground alone was wet with dew.

camp, were thrown into the utmost consternation, and began to attack each other, instead of their opponents. Zeba and Zalmunna found means to escape, for the present, with a party of fifteen thousand men, while Oreb and Zeb, two other Midianitish princes, were put to death by the Ephraimites; and a hundred and twenty thousand men were destroyed by the Hebrew victors: but they were, at length, overtaken by Gideon, and sacrificed to the manes of some of his brethren whom they had murdered at Mount Tabor. The citizens of Succoth and Peniel were, also, treated with exemplary rigor for having refused to supply the Israelites with provision whilst they were engaged in the pursuit of their idolatrous foes.

After this victory, which so effectually weakened the Midianites that they could never afterward make head against the sacred people, Gideon retired to his own inheritance, and executed the office of a judge for forty years, at the expiration of which time he died in a venerable age, and was gathered to his ancestors. Historical justice, however, obliges us to observe, that he sullied the glory of his great achievements, by collecting all the golden earrings, that had been taken from the enemy, and causing an ephod, or idol, to be made and set up in his own city, which, we are told, proved a snare both to him and to his house, because it became the occasion of a new kind of idolatry.

B. C. 1236. Upon the decease of Gideon an event took place which clearly demonstrated that the unstable Israelites had already thrown off their allegiance to God, and their gratitude to their deliverer: for, at the instigation of Abimelech, the seventy legitimate sons

of Gideon were assassinated, and the impious wretch who had caused their death, was proclaimed king, in the plain of Shechem. Jotham, the youngest son of the deceased warrior, fortunately escaped the fate of his brethren, and embraced this opportunity of addressing the tumultuous assembly from the summit of Mount Gerizzim : " The trees," said he, "once assembled to make choice of a king : they offered the supreme dignity to the olive tree, but received for answer that it could by no means divest itself of those qualities which were so acceptable to God and man, to reign over them ; the fig tree, being applied to, refused them on account of its sweetness ; and the vine preferred its juice to the proffered honor. At length the bramble, being invited to accept the dominion over them, replied that, if their designs were congenial with their professions, they should come and take shelter under its shadow, or otherwise that fire should come out of the bramble and destroy the cedars of Lebanon. Now therefore," continued Jotham, " if ye have acted with either justice or gratitude in murdering the sons of your late benefactor, and in bestowing the regal dignity upon Abimelech, then rejoice ye in your new king, and may he rejoice in you : but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem and the house of Millo ; and let fire come out from them and consume Abimelech."

Jotham had no sooner uttered this bold expostulation than he fled to the city of Beer, in the vicinage of Jerusalem, where he continued during the remainder of Abimelech's reign, which, according to his prediction, proved both vexatious and of short duration ; for besides his mortification at finding that none of the tribes would acknowledge his sovereignty, a spirit of dissen-

sion is expressly said to have been raised between him and the Shechemites, which propelled the latter to expiate their folly by his death : but God permitted him to escape for the present, that he might inflict a more severe chastisement upon him.

Gaal, the son of Ebed, being informed of the discontent of the Shechemites, resolved to blow the flame into an open rupture, and even designed to fortify the city against the object of their aversion : but Zebul the governor of the town, gave Abimelech full intelligence of these proceedings ; and Gaal and his followers were defeated with dreadful slaughter : the inhabitants of Shechem were also cruelly massacred ; the city was rased to the ground, and strewed with salt ; and the chief conspirators, who had retired to the temple of Baal Berith, were reduced to ashes with that idolatrous fane. Thus was Jotham's wish awfully accomplished, " Let fire come out from the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

Flushed with his success against these revolvers, Abimelech marched against the inhabitants of Thebez, a city of Judah ; and compelled them to retire into a tower, which he resolved to burn, like that of Baal Berith : but on his advancing to the entrance of the fortress, a certain female threw down part of a millstone, which fractured his skull, and reduced him to the necessity of requesting his servant to dispatch him, lest it should be reported that he had fallen by the hands of a woman.

After the demise of this impious fratricide, the Hebrews returned to their idolatrous practices, and even multiplied the number of their false gods ; a defection which enabled the Ammonites and Philistines to subdue

and keep them in subjection for the space of eighteen years. The calamities which they endured under these oppressors caused them to repent of their ingratitude and to cry for deliverance to the God of their fathers : but they were told to apply for succour to the deities, whose worship they had so often and so eagerly embraced. At length, however, the Almighty vouchsafed to interpose on their behalf, and Jephthah, the son of Gilead, was appointed judge and general of all the Israelitish forces. This valiant character levied troops and made all other arrangements with the utmost dispatch ; but, previously to his taking the field, he made a rash vow that he would, if victorious, sacrifice the first living creature that should come out of his house to meet him on his return. This inconsiderate affirmation tarnished the glories, and embittered the enjoyment of his exertions ; for though the Ammonites were utterly defeated, and Israel acquired an immense booty, the *only daughter* of the conqueror proved the victim of his imprudence ; for, hearing of her father's triumphant return, she went out at the head of a company of virgins to meet him with timbrels, dances, and other testimonies of rejoicing. At this affecting sight, Jephthah rent his clothes in the agony of grief, and acquainted his beloved child with her sad destiny : but she behaved with greater fortitude, and expressed the utmost readiness to die, on condition that she might, for the space of two months, retire with her companions to the mountains, and there bewail her melancholy fate.

This dear bought victory was attended with other inconveniences to Jephthah ; for he had scarcely returned to his own house, before the Ephraimites assembled, in a tumultuous manner, and threatened him with

the heaviest effects of their displeasure, because he had presumed to engage the enemy without requesting their assistance. Hereupon the general reproached them so severely with baseness and pusillanimity, that they proceeded to hostilities, and a fight ensued in which the Ephraimites were defeated with the loss of forty two thousand men. No farther mention is made of Jephthah, except that he judged Israel six years, and that he was buried in one of the cities of Gilead.

Elon, of the tribe of Zebulun, is said to have borne the office of a judge, among the Israelites, for the space of ten years, and to have been buried at Ajalon : but none of his actions have been transmitted to posterity.

Ibzan, the successor of Jephthah, was a native of Bethlehem. He had thirty sons, and as many daughters, whom he lived to see married : and governed Israel seven years.

Abdon, an Ephraimite, and a native of Pirathon, appears to have enjoyed the magistracy for about eight years : but he is merely noticed, in scripture, on account of his numerous progeny, having left, at his decease, forty sons, and thirty grand sons, who rode upon as many asses' colts according to the custom of the opulent Israelites.

Eli, who united in his own person the dignities of judge and high priest, is particularly remarked for his remissness and indolence, especially toward his own sons, whom he suffered to practise every species of licentiousness and debauchery, without reproof or correction. However, he seems to have been chosen by the Almighty, as the most proper judge for a people who had again involved themselves in thralldom by their

apostacy, and who were too apt to trust for deliverance to an arm of flesh.

After the rebellious tribes had groaned for a considerable time under their oppressors and the severity of their chastisement had led many of them to repentance, the Supreme Being raised them up a deliverer in the person of Samson, whose birth and extraordinary prowess had been predicted, to his parents, by an angel, and who soon began to exhibit marks of superior bravery in the camp of the Danites, between Zorah and Eshtaol.

This valiant youth having become enamoured of one of the virgins of Timnath, invited thirty Philistines to the celebration of his marriage and proposed a riddle for their solution within the seven days of the festival, promising to give thirty sheets and thirty changes of apparel to each man on their giving the required answer, and reminding them that he should expect a similar present if the enigma defeated their ingenuity. For three days the guests puzzled themselves with the solution; but, finding all their attempts fruitless they threatened to inflict the most dreadful severity upon the bride, their country woman, and her father's house, unless she devised some method to extricate them from their perplexity. Hereupon she requested her husband to explain his riddle to her in confidence, and wearied him so effectually with her unremitting importunities that he, at length, informed her of his having slain a young lion in the vineyards of Timnath, and of having seen, on another occasion, the carcass of the animal filled with bees and honey, which gave him the idea of proposing, as an enigmatical question, "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." This important intelligence was immediately communi-

cated to the guests ; and they, toward the close of the seventh day, gave in their answer. But Samson was perfectly aware of the treachery that had been practised : and, though he resolved to fulfil his promise, thirty of the inhabitants of Askelon were sacrificed to his resentment ; for he went thither and slew thirty men and gave their spoil to the persons who had expounded his riddle.

B. C. This marriage was productive of much calamity to the Philistines : for Samson's father
1136. in law, having given his wife to another man on pretence that she was not beloved by him, the Israelite caught three hundred foxes, and sent them, with firebrands at their tails, into the corn fields, so that all the standing harvest and other fruits of the earth were utterly consumed. Confounded at so great and unexpected a disaster, the Philistines eagerly inquired after the cause, and on hearing of the treatment which Samson had received, they took an ample revenge on his late wife and father in law by reducing them and their habitation to ashes. However, Samson's anger was not yet appeased ; for he fell unexpectedly upon a party of his oppressors, and defeated them with great slaughter.

This transaction roused the indignation of the Philistines, who, accordingly, pursued the object of their malice to the rock Etam and acquainted the men of Judah with their determination to chastise his insolence. Accordingly three thousand Israelites went up to the top of the rock, and, after remonstrating on the absurdity of opposing their masters, brought Samson, bound, toward his enemies. At this sight the Philistines raised a general shout ; but their triumph was of short duration, for Samson suddenly burst his bonds asunder,

and, rushing upon them with no other weapon than the jawbone of an ass, laid a thousand men dead at his feet. The instrument of their destruction was, also, rendered highly beneficial to the conqueror, for on his expressing a fear that he might perish with thirst, God vouchsafed to cleave a hollow place in the jawbone, whence issued out an amply supply of water.

After an interval of twenty years, the Philistines thought their enemy was within their power, and, accordingly, secured the gates of Gaza, with an intention to put him to death next morning. This precaution, however, was frustrated; for Samson, quitting his lodging at midnight, pulled up the city gates, with their posts and bars, and carried them up to the top of a hill in the vicinage of Hebron.

Subsequent to this transaction, Samson became enamoured of a Philistine harlot, called Delilah, who lived in the valley of Sorek, and who soon occasioned his destruction. The five lords of the Philistines, being apprized of this circumstance, offered Delilah a considerable sum to discover the secret of her lover's uncommon prowess, and to find by what method he might be reduced to the ordinary strength of other men. This proposal was cheerfully embraced, and all the arts of deceit and insinuation were practised by this unprincipled woman, to obtain the promised recompence; but Samson eluded the impending mischief, for some time, by assigning fictitious reasons for his strength. At length, however, being wearied with her importunities, he imprudently confessed that it lay entirely in his hair, and that he had been a Nazarite to God, from the time of his birth. Delilah perceiving that she had now obtained the invaluable secret, caused him to be

shaven, whilst he was asleep, and delivered him into the hands of his enemies, who barbarously put out his eyes, loaded him with fetters of brass, and compelled him to grind in the prison at Gaza.

Elated with their triumph over so formidable an enemy, the Philistines resolved to celebrate a festival to their god Dagon ; and, accordingly assembled in an edifice of such extent, that three thousand persons could conveniently sit upon the roof. In the height of their rejoicing and mutual congratulations, they sent for their blind adversary, to make sport with him ; but their festivity proved of short duration, for Samson, having requested permission to lean upon the two pillars which supported the roof, and having earnestly besought the Almighty to strengthen him once more, overturned the idolatrous fane, and buried the whole assembly in its ruins.

Meanwhile, Samuel, who had been dedicated to the service of God from his infancy, and who, at this time, was employed in opening and shutting the doors of the tabernacle, was roused from sleep by the voice of his Maker, and acquainted with the awful retribution which should speedily overtake the indolence of Eli, and the licentiousness of his sons. " Behold," said the Lord, " I will do a thing in Israel, at which the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house : when I begin I will also make an end : for I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth ; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not." Samuel was fearful of repeating these awful predictions to the high priest, but, being solemnly ad-

jured to hide nothing, he disclosed the whole purport of the vision. After this occurrence, Samuel received many testimonies of Divine favour, and displayed such superior wisdom and piety that all the Israelites revered him as a prophet of the Lord.

The fatal catastrophe of Samson's oppressors inspired Israel with a hope of effecting their emancipation from Philistine tyranny, and induced them to give battle to their haughty masters, in the vicinage of Ebenezer ; but God refused to espouse their cause, and permitted them to be ignominiously repulsed with the loss of four thousand men. Hereupon they resolved to bring the ark of the covenant into their camp, under the idea of striking a panic into the enemy, and of giving fresh animation to their own troops. This absurd project, however, was attended with the most fatal consequences ; for Eli's two sons, with a prodigious number of Hebrews, were put to the sword ; and the ark itself fell into the hands of the Philistines. At the news of these calamities, Eli, who had impatiently waited the result of the battle, fell backward from his seat and broke his neck ; and the wife of his son Phinehas, expired on the same occasion, after giving birth to a child whom she named Ichabod, to signify that the glory of Israel was departed.

The Philistines carried their invaluable prize to Ashdod, and placed it in the temple of Dagon ; but on their entering the fane, next morning, they had the mortification to see their idol lying upon his face before the ark. This circumstance, however, was attributed to mere accident, and the image was replaced in its original position ; but, next day, it was found in the same humble posture, with the additional vexation of its

head, feet and hands being broken off, and lying upon the threshold. This occurrence, together with a dangerous distemper which raged in Ashdod, induced the inhabitants to send away the ark, and it was accordingly removed to Gath ; but as the same affliction followed it both thither and to Ekron, it was at length dismissed, by the counsel of the Philistine priests, with suitable trespass offerings.

The unexpected return of this sacred symbol, occasioned much rejoicing among the inhabitants of Bethshemesh, and a sacrifice was cheerfully offered in the field where it stopped : but, some of the people having presumed to examine the interior of it, the festival was suddenly changed into a scene of woe, and upwards of fifty thousand persons were struck dead by their offended Maker. The survivors were so extremely terrified at this unexpected judgment that they immediately caused the ark to be removed to Kirjathjearim, where Eleazar, the son of Abinadab, was solemnly consecrated to become its keeper.

B. C 1096. Samuel, who by this time discharged the two important duties of judge and prophet, embraced this opportunity of exhorting the Israelites to put away their strange gods, to devote their hearts entirely to the worship of their Creator, and to implore that deliverance from the Philistine rulers, which their idolatrous practices had hitherto prevented. Accordingly the people promised to fulfil his injunctions, and a solemn assembly was held at Mizpeh, for the laudable purposes of fasting and prayer.

This meeting gave great umbrage to the Philistines, who immediately resolved to commence hostilities against their unhappy tributaries, and, with this design,

began their march toward Mizpeh : but, Samuel having offered a sucking lamb for a burnt offering, and having earnestly implored the Divine assistance, they were confounded and dispersed by a tremendous thunder storm, and chased with prodigious slaughter to the vicinage of Beth Car. This defeat gave so mortal a blow to the strength of the Philistines that they were rendered incapable of giving any molestation to Israel during the remaining years of Samuel's government.

During this interim of public tranquillity, Samuel made it his regular practice to take an annual circuit round Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpeh, to administer justice ; and then returned to Ramah, the place of his nativity, where he had erected an altar to the God of his fathers, and whither the Hebrews resorted to him at all other times.

Notwithstanding the beneficial effects that resulted from his prudent government, Samuel had the mortification to find that his two sons, whom he had entrusted with the magistracy at Beersheba, had rendered themselves despicable by their venality, and thereby induced the Israelites to prefer a request for a king, who might govern them like the neighbouring nations. Samuel was greatly surprised at a petition which not only evinced the unstable disposition of the people, but also savoured of the blackest ingratitude to that Adorable Being, who had hitherto guided, protected, and delivered them upon every emergency, and who had himself appointed that form of government which they were now solicitous to overturn.* He therefore expostulated warmly on the

* We must not suppose from this narration that a *monarchical government* was displeasing to the Almighty : but the crime of the Israelites was that of *ingratitude* to their *God* whom they now rejected from being king over them. However, when

impolicy and evil tendency of their proposal, and forewarned them of all the grievances which they and their families would in all probability, suffer under a monarchical government. But, as all his eloquence was exhausted in vain, and God commanded him to gratify their desire, he dismissed them for the present, and soon afterward, presented Saul, the son of Kish, to the people as the person whom the Lord had chosen for their ruler. The nomination of this man, who was possessed of an uncommon share of comeliness, and whose stature exceeded that of any of the Hebrews, by the head and shoulders, was received with great satisfaction by the majority of Israel, and the air rang with repeated acclamations of "God save the king," though a party of profligate persons pretended to despise him on account of his youth, and refused to acknowledge him for their lawful sovereign. Samuel, who had already told the people what a king might do in the plenitude of his power, now instructed the new monarch in all the duties of his high station, and dismissed the assembly with an appropriate exhortation.

their petition was answered, the Lord himself appointed the man who should sway the sceptre ; and, from this period to the end of the Scripture History, crowned heads are spoken of with the greatest respect, both by the Deity, his prophets, and apostles. Instead, therefore, of supposing that the regal authority is displeasing to the Almighty, let us pray for assistance to obey the sacred injunction "Fear God and honor the king."

CHAPTER VI.

From the Commencement of the monarchical Government among the Israelites, to the revolt of Ten Tribes under Jeroboam.

B. C. 1093. **I**T was not long before Saul had an opportunity of exhibiting his courage, and proving himself worthy of the supreme dignity ; for, the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead having sent to inform him, that they were closely besieged and threatened with the severest cruelties by Nahash, king of the Ammonites, he caused a yoke of oxen to be hewed in pieces, and distributed among all the tribes, with a declaration that whosoever refused to march to the relief of Jabesh, should see his cattle destroyed in the same manner. This assertion was attended with the desired consequences, and the people flocked in such numbers to the standard of their prince, that he soon compelled the tyrannical Ammonite to raise the siege, and to provide for his own safety by flight. This brilliant exploit inspired the Israelites with such zeal for their sovereign, that they eagerly proposed the death of all who had refused to submit to his authority. This design, however, was overruled by Saul, who generously observed that it would be both criminal and inconsistent to blot the commencement of his reign with a massacre, after the Deity had vouchsafed to crown his arms with conquest.

Samuel, having proposed to renew the kingdom after this glorious achievement, caused the victor to be in-

stalled with great solemnity, at Gilgal ; and embraced this opportunity of justifying his late administration ; because his authority, which now devolved upon Saul, could no longer prevent them from exhibiting any complaint against him. He also recapitulated all the wonders which God had wrought among the people, and convinced them of their ingratitude in demanding a king, by praying that the Lord would send a storm of thunder and rain, which immediately took place, though it was then the time of harvest, when the air was free from clouds and perfectly serene. He assured them, however, that he would continue his good offices toward them, during the remainder of his life ; and faithfully predicted the good or evil consequences that would result to themselves and their king, according to their compliance with, or their disobedience to the commands of their Creator.

In the second year of this reign the Philistines encamped in the vicinage of Michmash with thirty thousand charioteers, six thousand horsemen, and a prodigious multitude of foot soldiers, with a design to avenge the garrison of Geba, which had been recently cut off by Jonathan, the heroic son of Saul. At the sight of this formidable army, the Hebrews were overwhelmed with such consternation, that, instead of attempting to improve their late victory, or to evince their zeal for their valiant leader, they fled, in great numbers, to the caves and excavations of the rocks for shelter, while others retreated precipitately to Gilead, beyond the Jordan, and basely left the Land of Promise open to the incursions of their enemy. To add to the general consternation, the Philistines had craftily deprived them of all kinds of weapons ; so that when Saul came to

assemble his little army, who are said to have followed him trembling, there was neither sword nor spear in the hands of any man, except the king and his son Jonathan.

Anxious to learn the result of the approaching hostilities, Saul remained at Gilgal in expectation of receiving some satisfactory information from Samuel; but, as the prophet did not arrive within seven days, he ventured to offer a sacrifice, in order to procure the divine protection. The victim, however, was scarcely consumed before Samuel appeared, and condemned him, in the severest terms, for his impatience; Saul urged the distressing state of his affairs as an excuse, but the prophet told him he had committed a very foolish action, and that God would assuredly punish his disobedience by transferring the kingdom to a more deserving person. As soon as Samuel had uttered this prediction, he went to Gibeah of Benjamin, whither Saul and his son, also, marched at the head of six hundred unarmed men, who beheld the enemy making a threefold incursion into their country, and committing great depredations by separate detachments.

Whilst the pusillanimous Israelites were mourning over the fertile territories which they had neither courage nor inclination to defend, Jonathan, accompanied by his armour bearer, fell unexpectedly upon one of the enemy's outposts, and attacked them with such intrepidity, that they were instantly thrown into confusion, and those who escaped his sword fled toward their camp, where they occasioned a general consternation. Saul, perceiving the tumult, and finding that Jonathan was missing, rightly conjectured what had happened, and fell on the fleeing enemy with his little army, which

was rapidly increased by a number of Hebrew captives, who seized the opportunity of effecting their escape, and by many of those who had fled to the mountains for safety, but now came out to share the honors of a battle which God had evidently given into the hands of his people. This victory would have been more complete had not the king unadvisedly adjured his followers to take no refreshment in their pursuit, saying, "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies." Jonathan being ignorant of this imprecation, and quite weary with the day's toil, refreshed himself with a little honey which he found in passing through a wood ; and his transgression was afterward discovered by the urim, upon which his father declared he should be put to death. This sentence, however, was unanimously opposed by all the army, who swore that not a hair of his head should be injured, in consideration of the great deliverance which had resulted from his extraordinary valour, under the blessing of his God.

After this victory, Saul made such prudent arrangements, and received such important acquisitions of strength, that he not only continued to triumph over the Philistines, but also fought, with great success, against the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and other idolatrous nations. He also led a numerous army against the Amalekites, and, in obedience to the Divine injunction, ravaged their country without mercy. However, the king, Agag, and the best of the cattle, were spared by the conqueror, who upon this account was severely reprimanded by Samuel, and assured that God would now rend the kingdom from him, and give it to a person who should prove more tractable and obedient.

This heavy sentence had such an effect upon the king, that he confessed his fault, and only requested that, for decency sake, the prophet would accompany him whilst he paid his adorations to the Almighty. Samuel complied with this request, and caused the royal Amalekite to be brought before him, in order to recompence his cruelties upon his own head. Accordingly, having upbraided him with his former tyranny and thirst of slaughter, he hewed him in pieces before the Lord at Gilgal : he then returned to the place of his residence, where he continued mourning for Saul, till he was reproved by his Maker, and commanded to go to the house of Jesse, in Bethlehem, in order to anoint a new king over Israel instead of Saul, who had incurred the sentence of positive rejection.

B. C. Pursuant to this command, Samuel took a
1063. young heifer with him under pretence of offering a sacrifice, and went to the house of Jesse, where he caused all the sons of the favoured Hebrew to pass before him. When he beheld the eldest he exclaimed, " Surely the Lord's anointed is before him ;" but God rejected him, as he did also several others in their turns. Samuel then demanded whether these were all the sons ; and, on hearing that there was a stripling who tended his father's sheep, he caused him to be immediately brought into the house, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren.

Shortly after this interesting occurrence, Saul began to be tormented with an evil spirit, or, as some have imagined, with a deep melancholy, to dispel which he was advised to have recourse to the fascinating charms of music. This counsel was readily accepted, and the youngest son of Jesse, being celebrated for his perform-

ance on the harp, was immediately engaged as the minstrel. Accordingly when the king began to exhibit any signs of indisposition, he exerted himself to rouse his attention, and swept the tuneful strings with such pathos, skill, and sweetness, that the malady was soon removed, and David had leisure to return to the care of his flocks.

On a fresh declaration of war between Israel and the Philistines, the former took the field, under the conduct of their prince, and formed an encampment by the valley of Elah, while the latter pitched their tents at Ephes Dammim, between Shocoh and Azekah.

Whilst the two armies lay thus encamped, on either side the valley, a Philistine warrior, whose height was upwards of twelve feet eight inches, whose coat of mail weighed one hundred and eighty nine pounds Troy, and whose spear head weighed two and twenty of the same pounds, advanced in brazen armour, and with threatening gestures, to challenge any individual of the Israelitish host to decide, by single combat, which of the nations should rule, and which obey : but the Hebrews were so effectually terrified at his menaces and gigantic stature, that he repeated it in vain every morning and evening for forty days. At length young David, (being sent to the camp to inquire after his brethren, and hearing that Saul had promised his daughter as a reward to the man who should slay this opponent) resolved to perform the exploit, which no other individual of his nation had the courage to attempt. His brethren were highly incensed at his remarks on the occasion, and even treated him with unpardonable roughness ; but he persisted in his design, and presented himself before the king, with these remarkable words : " Thy servant

kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock ; and I went out after him and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth ; and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear : and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, because he hath defied the armies of the living God." In consequence of this representation, Saul consented that the young shepherd should make an attempt for the deliverance of Israel, and caused him to be equipped with a brazen helmet and a coat of mail. These, however, proved so cumbersome that David immediately laid them aside, and chose five smooth stones, out of a brook, with which he advanced toward the gigantic Goliath.

The proud warrior, perceiving a ruddy youth approaching toward him with no other weapons than a staff, a sling, and a shepherd's bag, was enflamed with fury, and exclaimed, " Am I a dog that thou comest against me with staves ?" Then, cursing him by his gods, " Come hither," said he, " and I will give thy flesh to the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field." David was by no means alarmed at this threat, but boldly answered, " Thou comest to me with a sword, a spear, and a shield ; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day, therefore will the Lord deliver thee into my hand, and I will smite thee, and take thy head from thee ; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the field, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel : and all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with

sword and spear ; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands." Goliath, enraged beyond endurance at these assertions, stepped forward to punish the presumption of his opponent ; but before he could reach him, a stone from David's sling sank into his forehead, and felled him to the ground. The youthful victor immediately decapitated the prostrate giant with his own sword, and carried off the enormous head in triumph, while the Philistines quitted their camp in the utmost confusion, and the Israelites pursued them, with prodigious slaughter, to the very gates of Gath and Ekron.

This brilliant achievement gave birth to the most ardent friendship between David and Jonathan, inso-much that the inspired historian tells us, " their souls were knit together," and David himself observes, on another occasion, that their love exceeded the love of women. But Saul's admiration was soon converted into jealousy, by a company of females, who imprudently extolled the young shepherd above him, in their triumphant songs, saying, that Saul had slain his thousands and David his ten thousands. From that time the king regarded David with an envious eye; and contrived various expedients to destroy him ; but all his cruel projects were defeated, and he had the mortification to find that his new son in law continued to augment his splendid conquests, and to endear himself to the tribes of Israel.

David, having narrowly escaped assassination, withdrew first to Ramah, and afterward to Naioth, to acquaint Samuel with his cruel persecution. He had not long been in this place, before his royal adversary sent messengers to apprehend him ; but, instead of execut-

ing their commission, they were suddenly inspired with a spirit of prophecy, and joined themselves to Samuel and the other prophets. The king, hearing of this circumstance, sent other officers, a second, and a third time, with similar success ; and at length determined to go himself. However, he had no sooner come within sight of Samuel, than he also began prophesying, and lay down, uncovered, all that day and night ; by which means David was enabled to withdraw, in order to hold a conference with his friend Jonathan.

At this interview the two young heroes made the most solemn protestations of perpetual amity, and Jonathan promised either to appease his father's anger, or to give his friend timely intimation of any serious danger. Accordingly, he exposed himself to the utmost resentment of the king, in pleading David's cause, and narrowly escaped with his own life. Finding, therefore, that all his exertions would be ineffectual, he went to apprise the son of Jesse of the fatal consequences that were likely to ensue, and to urge him to provide for his personal safety by immediate flight.

David, having taken a melancholy farewell of his beloved friend, hastened to the land of Nob, and, under pretence of executing some private business for the king, persuaded Abimelech, the high priest, to give him the sword of Goliath, and some refreshments for himself, and the young men that were with him. He then resolved to seek an asylum with the king of Gath ; but, finding that his late intrepid actions were remembered in that place with unabated resentment, he prudently changed his design, and counterfeited the behaviour of a lunatic. A circumstance which enabled him

to escape the vengeance of the Philistine courtiers, and to retire, unmolested, to the cave of Adullam.

Meanwhile Saul, having received intelligence of all that had passed at Nob between David and Abimelech, was so violently exasperated, that he caused the innocent high priest and all his kindred to be inhumanly murdered, and afterward wreaked his vengeance with such severity on the citizens of Nob, that none but Abiathar, one of the high priest's sons, escaped the general slaughter.

Among the principal persons who followed David in his exile were his parents, brethren, and the prophet Gad, who were soon joined by distressed and discontented subjects, to the number of four hundred. Abiathar, also, having fortunately escaped the sad fate of his relatives, fled to the retreat of David, where he was assured of protection, and cheered with the hope of a future remuneration for all his disasters. After some time, Gad advised that David should repair to the forest of Hareth, where he continued for a short space, and then removed to the wilderness of Ziph, with a considerable reinforcement of adherents. Here he received a private visit from Jonathan ; and, after repeating his former assurances of friendship, solemnly vowed that if he ever ascended the throne of Israel, he would recompence these kind offices with the second dignity in the kingdom.

The treachery of the Ziphites compelled David to remove first to the wilderness of Maon, and afterward to Engedi, where he was overtaken by Saul at the head of three thousand men ; but Heaven interposed on behalf of its votary, and the king by retiring to the fugitive's cave, was exposed to destruction. David, however, dis-

dained the idea of either taking an undue advantage, or of injuring the Lord's anointed, and contented himself with cutting off the skirt of his enemy's robe, and permitting him to escape alive. As soon, therefore, as Saul had quitted the cave, he boldly discovered himself, and earnestly requested that he might be no longer considered as a traitor, seeing he had now given a convincing proof of his loyalty and affection. This affecting speech, reinforced with the infallible testimony of the mutilated skirt, melted the jealous monarch into tears, and obliged him to acknowledge that his son's superior virtue and magnanimity, rendered him truly worthy to sway the Israelitish sceptre. He therefore urged him to take an oath, that he would never revenge his injuries upon the house of Saul ; but treat them with the same tenderness he had now shown to their father. This request was cheerfully granted, and, after mutual embraces, the king retired to Gibeah, and David returned with his faithful adherents to their temporary asylum.

B. C. This occurrence was soon followed by the 1059. death of Samuel, which happened in the ninety seventh year of his age. His administration of justice, for the space of twenty years, was marked by such strict integrity, that, on his making a solemn appeal to the people, no man could accuse him of one venal or injudicious action. He continued to act in the capacity of a prophet for thirty six years after the change of the Israelitish government : and his remains were interred, amidst universal lamentations, in his own estate at Ramah.

David, having removed from the vicinage of Engedi to the wilderness of Paran, sent a message to an opulent

Carmelite, called Nabal, who was then celebrating a feast with his sheep shearers, desiring him to send some refreshments for his little army, which had rigidly abstained from committing any depredations on the adjacent country, or its inhabitants. Nabal, being naturally of a churlish and covetous disposition, returned so insolent an answer to this request, that David threatened to extirpate his whole family. However, Abigail, the Carmelite's wife, prevented the execution of this design, by going in person to David's retreat, with an ample supply of provisions, and making a handsome apology for the rudeness of her husband. On her return home, she acquainted Nabal with the danger he had incurred by his unprovoked brutality ; upon which he was immediately taken ill and died. A circumstance which induced David to espouse* the widow, with whose modesty and discretion he had been greatly charmed.

Forgetful of his protestations at Engedi, Saul again resolved on the destruction of his rival, and accordingly encamped against him, at the head of three thousand chosen men, in the desert of Ziph. Here David had a fresh opportunity of demonstrating his innocence : for, having penetrated, with Abishai, into the enemy's camp, at midnight, and discovered Saul reposing in his tent, with a spear stuck in the ground by his bolster, and several of his officers sleeping around him, he positively refused to kill him, and contented himself with carrying away the spear and a cruse of water, that was placed under the monarch's head. On his return to his stronghold he called aloud to Saul's general, and upbraided him with negligence in regard to his master's safety, at the

* Saul had at this time given David's wife, Michal, to another man.

same time commanding him to produce the king's spear and cruse of water. Saul was overwhelmed with confusion at this adventure, and, after acknowledging himself indebted a second time for the preservation of his life to his injured son in law, he broke up his encampment, and departed with many assurances of friendship. David, however, was too well acquainted with his adversary's disposition to trust to his professions, and therefore retired to Achish, king of Gath, who generously pitied his misfortunes, and allotted the city of Ziklag for his residence.

During his stay at Ziklag, he was reinforced by some of Saul's relations, and many valiant persons of the tribes of Benjamin Gad, and Judah, with whom he made several incursions into the territories of the Geshurites, Gerizzites and Amalekites ; whilst the king was persuaded that these expeditions were undertaken against Judah, and reposed such confidence in the attachment of David, that he would have given him a considerable command in an army against Saul, had not his design been overruled by the lords of the Philistines.

Whilst David was employed against some of the idolatrous nations, the Amalekites resolved to take an ample revenge for the injuries they had lately sustained, and accordingly marched against Ziklag, which they subdued and reduced to ashes. They then set out on their return with the plunder and captives : but, being unexpectedly overtaken and attacked by David whilst they were indulging in mirth and jollity, they were slaughtered from break of day till sunset, so that none of them escaped destruction, except four hundred young men who were indebted for their safety, to the fleetness of their dromedaries.

Meanwhile Saul, finding himself abandoned by many of his bravest subjects, and being extremely anxious concerning the event of an approaching battle, went in disguise to Endor, and prevailed on a woman, who had a familiar spirit, to raise up Samuel. When the sorceress had consented to gratify his request, and the expected phantom made its appearance, Saul bowed himself to the earth, and apologised for his unlawful expedient, by adverting to the distracted situation of his affairs. But the prophet replied that his application for counsel was totally useless, since he had forfeited the love of his God by disobedience, and solemnly assured him that he should, on the following day, be deprived of his kingdom and life. This awful prediction had such an effect upon the agitated monarch, that he fainted away, and continued for some time under a total deprivation of sense. At length, however, he was prevailed on to take some slight refreshment, and to return to his army.

B. C. The battle began, next morning, between the 1055. Israelites and Philistines, with extraordinary fury ; but victory soon decided in favour of the enemy, and the Hebrew troops were routed with prodigious slaughter. Saul, perceiving that his case was now totally hopeless, and dreading the horrors of captivity, terminated his earthly calamities by an act of suicide. His dead body was found by the Philistines, and exposed, with those of his unfortunate sons, upon the walls of Beth Shan : but the inhabitants of Jabesh soon removed them from that ignominious station, and interred them with due solemnity, as an acknowledgement of gratitude for the important deliverance which Saul, at his accession, had wrought on their behalf.

David, having lamented the fatal catastrophe of his sovereign, and his friend Jonathan, and having punished an Amalekite with death for affirming that he had given Saul his last wound, removed to Hebron, where he was again anointed king by the tribe of Judah, who resorted to him in great multitudes. Abner, however, caused Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, to be proclaimed at Mahanaim ; so that the kingdom was divided between two monarchs, who governed their respective partisans, without any opposition for the space of two years.

Immediately after his elevation to the regal dignity, David sent a deputation to thank the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead, for their respectful behaviour on the death of their prince. And about the same time, he strengthened his political importance by espousing Maacah, princess of Geshur.

At the end of two years, a rupture broke out between the forces of David and Ishbosheth, and a battle ensued, in which the latter were defeated with a great slaughter, and their general, Abner, was compelled to flee for his life. The pursuit was continued, with unabated vigor till sunset, when the Benjamites rallied near the wilderness of Gibeon, with a resolution to make a desperate defence ; but Abner being totally exhausted, called to David's general, and entreated him to put a stop to an effusion of blood, which would infallibly cause much regret and bitterness in the end. Accordingly Joab, having sounded a retreat, returned to Hebron, and Abner with the poor remnant of his army proceeded to Mahanaim.

Some time after this engagement, Abner, being reprimanded by Ishbosheth for some improper conduct, resolved to throw off his allegiance and embrace the

earliest opportunity of tendering his services to the rival sovereign. Accordingly, having obtained permission to convey Michal to her first husband, he went to Hebron, and was very graciously received : but as he was returning home, he received a message from Joab, and, by attending the summons, became an easy prey to the jealousy of that warrior, who assassinated him with his own hand, under pretence of revenging the death of his brother Asahel. David expressed the most lively sorrow at this tragical circumstance, and, after uttering many imprecations against the murderer, attended the corpse of Abner to the grave with all possible solemnity and respect.

B. C. The death of Abner was soon followed by 1053. that of Ishbosheth ; for Baanah and Rechab two of his captains, murdered him whilst he was asleep, and carried his head to Hebron, in hope of receiving an ample reward. David, however, expressed the utmost abhorrence of their treachery, and caused the ensanguined head to be deposited in Abner's sepulchre ; while the barbarous regicides were put to death, and their hands and feet were hung up over the pool of Hebron.

After David had enjoyed the government, in Hebron, for about seven years and a half, the rest of the tribes voluntarily assembled, and anointed him king over all Israel : A circumstance which soon enabled him to take both Jerusalem and the fortress of Sion by assault, and to give a decisive overthrow to the Jebusites, who had hitherto withstood the united attacks of Judah and Simeon. The conquered fortress was now converted into the royal residence, and the city, being enlarged and fortified, became, from that time, the metropolis of Judea: The Philistines, also were so effectually dis-

confited, in two different engagements, that they were never again in a condition to make head against the Hebrews.

Strengthened by these important victories, and conceiving himself to be firmly established on the throne, David formed an alliance with the king of Tyre, and prevailed on him to send a certain number of expert workmen, and a sufficient quantity of fine timber to build a palace on the spot which was now honoured with the appellation of the city of David. He also formed the design of making this place the centre of God's worship, by removing thither the ark of the covenant which had remained for near fifty years at Kirjath Jearim.

This design being unanimously approved by the elders of Israel, the ark was set upon a new cart in order to be carried to Jerusalem, accompanied by the king and his whole court, together with a multitude of priests and Levites, who played on various instruments, and chanted the high praises of their Creator. However, their joy was suspended by a sudden and unexpected accident; for the oxen that drew the ark happening to start at Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah, one of Abinadab's sons, clapped his hand upon the sacred symbol, and was immediately struck dead for his presumption. In consequence of this awful occurrence, the ark was deposited in the house of a Levite, called Obed Edom, for the space of three months, at the expiration of which time it was conveyed with extraordinary solemnity to Jerusalem, and placed in a magnificent tabernacle which had been purposely erected for its reception. Priests and Levites were also appointed to officiate before it, according to their respective functions, and a number of musicians were engaged to set

and accompany such psalms as the king or any other inspired person, thought proper to compose for the sacred festivals.

David, having made these arrangements, next conceived the desire of building a sumptuous temple to the God of his fathers, and sent to desire a private conference with Nathan upon the subject. The prophet obeyed the royal summons, and applauded the pious design : but he was, afterward, directed to tell the king, that, though his intentions were acceptable to God, he was not a proper person to undertake such a work, because his hands had been frequently defiled with blood : but that he should leave a son and successor, who should execute his wishes with all imaginable splendor. On the reception of this message, David prostrated himself before the Lord with becoming sentiments of gratitude ; and, from that time, began to lay up immense quantities of precious stones, metals, timber and other materials for the use of his promised heir.

B. C. 1037. After making some prudent regulations in the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of his kingdom, and conferring some particular marks of favour upon Mephibosheth, the only son of his friend Jonathan, David was grossly insulted by Hanun, king of the Ammonites, and, about the same time, attacked by some forces belonging to the Syrians. The former, however, was severely chastised for his insolence, and the latter were so effectually defeated, that they earnestly requested a peace on the shameful condition of becoming tributary to the Hebrews. During the siege of Hanun's metropolis, a circumstance took place which fixed an indelible stain on David's character, and tarnished the glory of all his achievements ; for, whilst Joab with a select

detachment, was fighting, at Rabbah, against the enemies of Israel, the king became enamoured of the wife of his captain Uriah, and gratified his unlawful passion at the expence of honor and religion. He also used the most reprehensible means to conceal the perpetration of his crime ; and, finding these ineffectual, he sent a letter to Joab, wherein he commanded him to expose the injured husband to some imminent danger, and leave him to the fury of the besieged. This nefarious project was attended with the desired effect, and David sheltered the adulteress from punishment by making her his wife.

In consequence of this transgression, Nathan was sent to Court, by the Almighty, to awaken the offender to a sense of contrition, and to induce him to pronounce sentence against himself. Accordingly, the prophet accosted him with a parable of an opulent man who had spared his own numerous flocks, and seized upon an only favourite lamb of a poor neighbour, to satisfy the appetite of an hungry visitor. He embellished this story with such aggravating circumstances, and spoke so pathetically of the tenderness with which the poor man had nourished his beloved lamb, that the king hastily exclaimed, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die ; and he shall restore the lamb four fold, because he had no pity." At the awful replication, however, "Thou art the man," he was overwhelmed with confusion ; and upon the denunciation of God's vengeance against him, he acknowledged, in the language of true humility, that he had sinned against the Lord. This remorse obtained an alleviation of his punishment : but the fruit of his adulterous commerce with Bathsheba was doomed to death, and he was solemnly assured that his crime should be

expiated by the defilement of his own wives in the face of the sun. David endeavoured to obtain a reprieve for his child, by fasting, prayer, and other marks of repentance ; but, finding all his exertions ineffectual, he submitted to the will of his Maker. Some time after, Bathsheba bore him another son, whom he called Solomon, and who was honoured, by Nathan, with the epithet of Jedidiah, or “ beloved of the Lord.”

From this time, David's life was embittered by many domestic vexations. Ammon, his eldest son, had scarcely attained his eighteenth year when he committed incest with one of his sisters, and shortly afterward fell a sacrifice to the resentment of Absalom, who sheltered himself from punishment with the king of Geshur, and after an interim of three years procured a free pardon.

B. C. Absalom had no sooner returned to Jerusalem
1023. and reinstated himself in his father's affection, than he conceived the infamous design of exciting a general revolt, and seizing the kingdom. Accordingly, he procured a sumptuous equipage to attract attention, and, by an affected compassion for those who brought their causes before the royal tribunal, he insensibly acquired a dangerous degree of popularity, and soon persuaded the fickle populace that his government would be much more equitable and beneficial than that of the reigning prince. Having, by these means, assured himself of a numerous body of partisans, he asked permission to go to Hebron, under pretence of performing a vow, and there put himself at the head of the rebels who had been previously instructed to proclaim him king, on their hearing the sound of the trumpet.

Upon the first intelligence of this unnatural revolt, David left his palace under the care of ten concubines,

and retreated, with a few faithful adherents, to the open country. The high priests Zadok and Abiathar, resolved to follow their sovereign in his sad extremity ; but he positively refused this mark of their allegiance, and commanded them to carry back the ark to Jerusalem, urging the impropriety of removing that sacred symbol on such an occasion, and reminding them that they might render him more beneficial service by sending intelligence of all that passed in the city, and assisting him with occasional advice. As soon as the priests had departed, David earnestly prayed that the counsels of Ahithophel, a famous politician, who had deserted his cause, might be rendered abortive ; and then proceeded with his little troop toward Mount Olivet. The march thither was unspeakably mournful ; the king, bathed in tears, with his head covered, and his feet bare, ascended slowly, while his sorrowful retinue, unable to offer consolation in so distressing an exigence, evinced the acuteness of their anguish by the strongest expressions of grief. When they had reached the top of the mountain, and had offered up their humble petitions to the Deity, they were joined by an old friend, named Hushai, who came to share the sad fortune of his prince ; but at David's request, he consented to return and offer his services to the usurper, in order to obtain an opportunity of confounding Ahithophel's counsel, and of gaining satisfactory intelligence of every new design and resolution.

David proceeded on his melancholy journey till he reached the village of Bahurim, where he was grossly insulted, and even pelted with stones, by a person of Saul's family named Shimei. This act of audacity

enraged the king's attendants so violently that they immediately offered to smite off the offender's head ; but David restrained their fury, by reminding them, that since his own son was capable of conspiring against his life, it was by no means strange that this Benjamite should regard him with detestation as having been the author of Saul's greatest misfortunes. He likewise remarked that the imprecations which had roused their indignation might probably have resulted from the command of the Almighty, in which case patience and resignation would be the best means of averting their effects.

Meanwhile, Absalom entered Jerusalem in triumph, and having ordered a pavilion to be reared up on the roof of the palace, violated the females whom he found there, according to the prediction of Nathan. Ahithophel, who had counselled the usurper to commit this daring outrage in order to preclude the possibility of a reconciliation with the exiled monarch, next proposed that he should be sent with a body of twelve thousand men to fall upon David's little company, while they were exhausted with flight and distracted by apprehension : but Hushai, who had contrived to conciliate Absalom's esteem by the warmth of his congratulations, argued so eloquently against this measure, and adduced such plausible reasons for his remonstrance, that the design was laid aside ; and Ahithophel, in a fit of vexation, rode home and hanged himself.

David, being apprized of this circumstance, crossed the Jordan, with his little army, at midnight, and next morning arrived at Mahanaim, where several of his faithful servants had assembled to tender their services, and to present him with provisions, couches, tents, and

other necessary articles. At the same time, the usurper advanced with a powerful body of forces, under the conduct of Amasa, and encamped in the land of Gilead.

After taking some needful refreshment, and arranging his affairs in the best possible order, David divided his army into three bodies, under the command of Joab and his two brothers ; and declared his intention of appearing in person against his rebellious son. This design, however, was overruled, and the king remained at Mahanaim with a small body of guards, whilst a battle was fought in the forest of Ephraim, which terminated in the defeat of the rebels and the death of their unnatural leader ; for while the revolted troops were fleeing from the superior bravery of their opponents, Absalom was caught by his hair in the thick branches of a tree, and exposed to the fury of Joab, who immediately pierced him through the body with three arrows, and flung him into a pit which was afterward filled up with stones. David, however, appears to have been more solicitous for the safety of his son, than for his own restoration : for on his receiving intelligence of the event, he retired to an apartment over the gate of Mahanaim, exclaiming, in all the agony of paternal grief, “ O Absalom, my son, my son, would to God I had died for thee ! ”

After the agitated monarch had given full vent to his sorrow, Joab took the liberty to rebuke him for his weakness, and argued so forcibly on the fatal consequences which might result from it, that David was obliged to conceal his resentment for the loss of his son, and to show himself to the people with a cheerful countenance. By adopting this expedient he effectually con-

ciliated the esteem of his subjects, and received such demonstrations of public affection, that he was soon in a capacity to return to Jerusalem. He, accordingly, requested the elders of Judah to escort him to his metropolis, and sent to assure Amasa that if he would come over to his party, he should be appointed general of the army instead of Joab, who was dismissed. But these arrangements were productive of much mischief; for the partiality expressed towards Judah excited such jealousy in the other tribes, that they again threw off their allegiance, and Joab was inflamed with a spirit of revenge which was only pacified by the blood of his new rival.

Sheba, the rebellious Benjamite who had assembled the discontented Hebrews by sound of trumpet, and bade open defiance to the king and his adherents, was pursued by Abishai with such speed, that he was compelled to take refuge behind the walls of Beth Maachah. Joab, having assassinated his competitor at the stone of Gibeon, hastened to this place, and, without the sovereign's orders, began the siege in form: but a woman having appeared on the battlements, with an assurance that Sheba's head should be thrown over the wall, on condition of his forbearing to commit hostilities, he marched back to Jerusalem, and gained such popularity, that David deemed it expedient to reinstate him in his former employment.

B. C. 1021. About two years after this event, Judea was smitten with a dreadful famine, which raged with unabated fury for three years. At length, however, it was discovered that God had inflicted this heavy calamity for the murder of the Gibeonites, whom Saul and his cruel relatives had unjustly caused to be slain.

Hereupon the king sent to know what satisfaction the Gibeonites demanded for that injury, and, in compliance with their request, caused seven males of Saul's family to be put to death ; by which means the famine was stayed.

After this transaction, the Philistines were defeated with great loss in four successive battles : but David had not long enjoyed the fruits of victory, before he incurred the Divine displeasure, and brought a dreadful calamity upon the kingdom by numbering his people, in opposition to the remonstrances of his faithful servants. The unfortunate account was no sooner taken, than the prophet Gad was sent to the offender, in order to propound as a punishment, either seven years' famine, three days' flight before the enemy, or three days' pestilence. The king was now forcibly struck with the impropriety of his late conduct, and bitterly regretted the folly which had subjected him to the necessity of making so hard a choice ; but as he knew that it would be fruitless to expect a free pardon, and as he rightly considered that the calamities of war and famine would be chiefly felt by the lower orders of the community, who had had no share in the transgression, he chose the pestilence, as the most equal punishment of the three, and as that which appeared to be more immediately under the Divine direction. No sooner had he fixed his choice, than that dreadful distemper made its appearance, and diffused its baneful effects through the country with such terrific rapidity, that seventy thousand persons were cut off before the expiration of the third day. At length, however, while the destroying angel stood by the threshing floor of Araunah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem began to feel the sad effects of his

commission, David prostrated himself before the Lord, and earnestly requested that he might be permitted to expiate his crime with his own life, and that an innocent people might no longer groan under so dreadful a calamity. This humble petition was crowned with success ; and the king, having erected an altar on the threshing floor, had the satisfaction of beholding his victims consumed by miraculous fire, as a token of his Maker's acceptance and reconciliation.

B. C. 1015. David had scarcely attained the age of seventy years, when he began to feel the most certain indications of approaching dissolution, and his declining health induced Adonijah, the brother of Absalom, to make splendid preparations for ascending the throne : but the king, being reminded of his promise in favour of Solomon, and hearing that Adonijah had prepared a feast at Zoheleth for his partisans, who designed to invest him with the regal title, issued out orders that the son of Bathsheba should be immediately mounted on his own mule, and conducted to Gihon, in order to receive the royal unction ; and to be, afterward, proclaimed his successor by sound of the trumpet. These commands were executed so suddenly, that the conspirators were totally ignorant of the transaction, till they were alarmed with repeated shouts of " Long live king Solomon !" The cause of these acclamations being fully explained to them by the son of Abiathar, they dispersed in the utmost consternation, and their ambitious leader fled for refuge to the horns of the altar ; but, on making proper submissions, he was permitted to retire unmolested to his own house.

Shortly after this transaction, David sent for his beloved son to receive his last admonitions. He reminded

him, that all the promises of the Deity relative to himself and his posterity were conditional, and would be fulfilled in proportion to his and their obedience. He recommended some faithful adherents to his particular favour and protection ; exhorted him to punish Joab for the murder of Absalom, Abner, and Amasa ; and reminded him that though Shimei's insolence had been hitherto pardoned in consequence of an oath, yet that obligation would be now cancelled. Having made these observations, and conjured his successor to adhere strictly to the statutes of his God, the royal Israelite expired in the seventy fifth year of his age, and in the fortieth of his reign. He left an immense treasure in his palace, besides that which was set apart for the temple ; and his remains were interred, with due solemnity, in the city of Jerusalem.

Notwithstanding the disgrace which he had incurred by his late attempt upon the crown, Adonijah made use of Bathsheba's intercession to obtain the hand of a Shunamitish virgin, who had been the cherisher of David's old age, but Solomon was highly incensed at the request, and caused his brother to be immediately put to death. Joab was also dragged from the altar to execution, and succeeded in his post of general by Benaiah ; Abiathar, who had been engaged in the late conspiracy, was degraded from the sacerdotal office, and confined to his own territories at Anathoth ; and Shimei was told that he must either confine himself within the walls of Jerusalem, or incur the penalty of death. The old man thanked the king for his unexpected clemency ; but venturing, some years after, to pursue two runaway servants, his disobedience received the threatened punishment.

Solomon, having acquitted himself of his father's in-junctions, deemed it advisable to form an alliance with the Egyptians, and accordingly married the princess of that people, who received, by way of dowry, the city of Gezer, which had been taken from the Canaanites. He then removed to Gibeon, where the ark was stationed, and gave such proofs of his devotion to the God of his fathers, that he was indulged in a dream, with a vision of the Deity, and with an assurance that he should receive the accomplishment of any single wish. Accordingly he prayed for such a degree of wisdom as might enable him to sway the sceptre with prudence and sagacity. A petition so acceptable to the Almighty, that he was immediately endowed with greater wisdom than had ever enlightened a human mind, and was gratified with the promise of every sublunary blessing, which he had judiciously overlooked.

It was not long before Solomon gave a public and convincing proof of his extraordinary discernment ; for two women, having approached his tribunal with a dead and a living child, and each having asserted with equal ardor that the living infant was her own, he ordered the object of their dispute to be cut asunder, and equally divided between the claimants. The real mother was so deeply affected with this sentence, that she immediately renounced her pretensions, on condition the child's life might be spared ; and by that means demonstrated the justness of her own cause, and the baseness of her antagonist.

Nor was it only in the administration of justice that the new monarch acquired universal esteem ; but his wisdom and magnificence shone conspicuous in the choice of his counsellors, the institution of his laws, the

economy of his household, the strength and discipline of his army, and the immense number and wealth of his subjects. Beloved by his friends, revered by his allies, and dreaded by his enemies, he lived in the most profound tranquillity, and enriched his metropolis to such a degree, that even gold and silver lost their intrinsic value by their extraordinary abundance ; strangers flocked thither from all parts of the earth, to behold the splendor of his court ; and those who had formed the very highest expectations were obliged to acknowledge that their conceptions had fallen infinitely short of the reality.

Having prevailed on Hiram, king of Tyre, to send a certain quantity of cedar, fir, and other timber, upon floats to Joppa, together with some skilful artificers. Solomon resolved to accomplish his father's great design of building a temple to the God of Israel ; and accordingly laid the foundation in the fourth year of his reign, and the four hundred and eightieth after the emancipation of the Hebrews from their Egyptian bondage. The number of workmen employed was so prodigious, and their industry so unremitting, that the sacred structure was finished in little more than seven years, and foreigners were attracted to Judea by a new object which might have been justly stiled the glory of the earth.

B. C. The ceremony of dedication began on the 1005. eighth day of the seventh month of the sacred year, or the first of the civil year, and lasted seven days, after which began the feast of tabernacles, and continued seven days longer, so that the multitude which flocked to that solemnity remained, at least, fourteen days in Jerusalem. The ceremony commenced with a grand procession, in which the ark of the cov-

enant was carried with all possible solemnity to the new edifice, and placed between the golden cherubims in the most holy place, whilst the air reechoed with the melodious sound of one hundred and twenty trumpets, and with the voices of the Levites, who sang the high praises of their God, and, at proper stanzas, repeated, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, and his mercy endureth for ever." Whilst the ministers of the temple were thus employed, and the hearts of the congregation were impressed with the most lively sense of duty and gratitude, the consecrated fane was suddenly filled with a cloud, and the glory of the Lord appeared with such extraordinary radiance, that even the priests were unable to stand to offer the sacrifices which they had prepared.

Solomon, who had accompanied the procession with his whole court, now kneeled down, and spreading his hands toward heaven, dedicated the building to God, in an appropriate prayer, which he offered in the audience of all the people, entreating the Divine mercy to make it its residence in favour of the Israelites, and to accept the prayers of all the sons of Jacob, which should be directed thither in every exigence, and from every part of the world. A miraculous fire descending upon the altar, and consuming the victims, proved that these petitions were accepted ; Solomon, having pronounced an emphatic benediction on the people, retired to his own palace ; and the festival terminated with such a prodigious number of sacrifices, that the priests were obliged to erect several temporary altars in the court of the temple.

After the completion of this sumptuous design, Solomon erected two magnificent palaces for himself and

the princes of Egypt ; rebuilt and colonised twenty cities in Galilee ; and employed his Canaanitish slaves in surrounding his metropolis with a strong wall, and in fortifying all other places of importance in his dominions. He, likewise, caused a navy to be built upon the coasts of the Red Sea, and sent it, under the care of some expert Tyrian mariners, to Ophir, whence he received, after an interim of three years, an immense quantity of precious stones, metals, ivory, ebony, spices, and some peculiar sorts of timber which were used for the decoration of the galleries about the temple, and other sacred purposes.

Among the illustrious personages who were induced to visit Jerusalem by the fame of Solomon's magnificence, was the queen of Sheba, a princess of transcendent wisdom, and of such uncommon opulence, that she actually vied with the Israelitish monarch, in the splendor of her equipage, and the sumptuousness of her presents. The king received her with great respect, and entertained her with a view of all the magnificent objects in his metropolis, at which she expressed the highest satisfaction ; but she was more attracted by Solomon's wisdom than his power, and readily owned that it was not without reason that he was esteemed the wisest prince of his time. After convincing herself of the depth of his penetration, by proposing various subtle questions and enigmas for his solution, she presented him with one hundred and twenty talents of gold, an immense quantity of precious stones, and many rich perfumes, and was dismissed with equal marks of friendship and munificence.

Hitherto we have observed nothing in Solomon's life but what conveys the highest idea of his wisdom, wealth,

and piety : but as he advanced in years he became infatuated with the love of idolatrous women, and gradually sunk into the practices of their national abominations ; insomuch that Jerusalem itself was surrounded with idols, temples, and altars, in open defiance to the Divine command, and the whole land was defiled with idolatrous incense and other offerings. In consequence of this defection, the deluded prince was assured, in a dream, that his successors should be punished for his ingratitude with the loss of the whole kingdom, except the tribe of Judah, which should continue its allegiance, in consideration of the promise which God had given to David. Whether Solomon was awakened to repentance by this awful denunciation, is a point on which the sacred historian is silent : but it appears that he paid the debt of nature in the fifty eighth year of his age, and the fortieth of his reign ; and that he was buried in the stately sepulchre of his father, at Jerusalem.

During the latter part of Solomon's reign, a spirit of discontent had been gradually diffused through the land of Canaan, and the adjacent countries : so that Rehoboam, the heir apparent, had three powerful enemies to encounter, viz. Hadad, king of Edom, who bore an inveterate hatred to the house of David, by whom he had been driven into exile ; Rezin, king of Damascus, who longed for an opportunity of revenging David's hostilities on the Zobeans ; and Jeroboam, an enterprising Ephraïmite, who had been told, by the prophet Ahijah, that God would give him the sovereignty over the ten tribes which were to shake off their allegiance to the reigning family.

B. C. In this posture of affairs, Rehoboam went,
975. with his courtiers, and the elders of all the tribes,

to receive the homage of his people at Shechem ; but they positively refused to acknowledge him for their sovereign, unless he would promise to lighten that yoke which, toward the end of his father's reign, had become insupportable. The prince took three days to meditate on this proposal, and at length replied (in pursuance of the advice of some rash youths who had been brought up with him in luxury and indolence) that he designed to govern with greater severity than Solomon had ever exercised ; and that, if they presumed to murmur, he would use scorpions, instead of whips, as the instruments of their chastisement. This insolent answer exasperated the Israelites so highly, that they immediately renounced their allegiance, and ten of the tribes placed themselves under the government of Jeroboam, according to the prediction of Ahijah. Judah and Benjamin still adhered to the house of David, and conducted Rehoboam to Jerusalem, where they made formidable preparations for reducing their revolted brethren to obedience ; but the intended hostilities were soon prevented by the prophet Shemaiah, who solemnly asserted that this defection was of God. From this time, therefore, the Land of Promise was divided into two kingdoms, each of which, being governed by a succession of princes of various character and fortune, demands a separate examination.

CHAPTER VII.

The Kingdom of Israel, from its foundation by Jeroboam, to its dissolution by Shalmaneser King of Assyria.

B. C. 975. **J**EROBOAM had no sooner received the regal title than he rebuilt Penuel, fixed his royal residence at Shechem, and erected two golden calves, one at Dan and the other at Bethel, in order to prevent his new subjects from going to offer their devotions, on any solemn occasion, at Jerusalem. He also built several altars and temples on the high places, and selected some of the vilest of the people to officiate as priests before his idols, because all the Levites had refused to forsake their lawful sovereign.

Pursuant to the king's proclamation, a prodigious concourse of people assembled at Bethel, and magnificent preparations were made for the dedication of the two calves: but in the midst of the solemnities, a prophet denounced the destruction of the new altar by a future king of Judah, and assured the multitude that the altar itself should immediately exhibit a proof of God's indignation. These words were no sooner uttered than it burst asunder, and the ashes that were upon it fell to the ground. Jeroboam was so violently incensed at this incident, and at the menaces with which it had been accompanied, that he stretched out his hand to cause the prophet to be apprehended; but, to his great surprise, he felt it withered in an instant: upon proper sub-

mission, however, the monarch's hand was restored, and the prophet departed toward his own city.

Notwithstanding this extraordinary event, Jeroboam continued to practise every species of idolatrous abomination, and to debauch his subjects from the worship of the true God. At length, his son being afflicted with a dangerous malady, he sent his wife to inquire of the prophet Ahijah respecting his recovery. Ahijah, though blind with age, knew his visitor immediately, and bade her tell her husband that since he had basely forgotten the author of his greatness, and had filled Israel with the worship of dumb idols, he should not only be deprived of his sick child, but all his posterity should be eventually cut off, and become the prey of dogs and ravens. The king, however, still persisted in his transgression, and continued to defile the land with heathenish superstitions till his death, which happened about twenty two years after his exaltation to the throne.

Nadab succeeded to the throne of Israel upon the demise of Jeroboam, but nothing remarkable happened during his short reign. He is represented as a profligate prince, who retained all the idolatrous practices of his father; and at the expiration of two years he was killed, at the seige of Gibbethon, by a man named Baasha, of the tribe of Issachar, who boldly seized on the vacant throne, and exterminated the whole race of Jeroboam.

B. C. Baasha had no sooner obtained possession of
930. the sovereignty, than he began to build a fortress at Ramah, to cut off all communication with the rival kingdom; and formed an alliance with Benhadad, against the king of Judah; but by a well timed expedient of Asa, the Syrian monarch was induced to

abandon his new ally, and the usurper was compelled to leave his important work unfinished. The idolatrous practices of this monarch were of so heinous a nature, and his constant wars with Asa were so displeasing to God, that Jehu, the son of Hanani, was commissioned to tell him, that since he had walked in his predecessor's footsteps, he should also share in his punishment, and be cut off with all his posterity. This awful prediction was soon accomplished in the death of Baasha, and the unhappy fate of his descendants.

Elah succeeded his father in the government ; but after an unworthy reign of two years, he was assassinated, at a banquet, by one of his officers, named Zimri, who immediately usurped the crown, and caused every branch of his predecessor's family to be massacred without pity or distinction. However, he did not long enjoy the object of his ambition ; for, at the expiration of seven days, he was besieged so closely by Omri, another general officer, that he shut himself up in the royal palace, and setting it on fire, perished in the flames, to avoid a more ignominious death.

Omri, being acquainted with this circumstance, and having gained a decisive victory over Tibni, the son of Ginath, whom one part of the people had elected king, took full possession of the throne ; and founded the city of Samaria, which he, afterward, made the metropolis of his dominions. Nothing particular has been recorded concerning his transactions ; but he appears to have practised and encouraged all the idolatries which had proved so fatal to his predecessors.

B. C. Upon the demise of this prince, his son Ahab,
 918. took possession of the crown, and espoused Jezebel the princess of Zidon, by which imprudent ac-

tion a new system of abomination was introduced into Israel, and the worshippers of God were subjected to a cruel persecution. In consequence of these enormities, the prophet Elijah presented himself before Ahab, and threatened him with a severe famine, as a punishment for his disobedience ; but the king seems to have been so regardless of the Deity's anger, that he persisted in all his impieties, and sought out the prophets of God with such avidity, that Elijah himself was compelled to flee for safety to a lonely place in the vicinage of the river Jordan, where he drank of the brook Cherith, and received a daily allowance of food from some ravens, which his Divine Master had directed to feed him.

After some time, the waters of Cherith being exhausted, and the famine beginning to rage in the land, Elijah was commanded to go to Zarephath, a city of the Zidonians, where Providence had made other provision for his sustenance. Accordingly he travelled thither, and at the entrance of the city requested a widow, who was employed in gathering sticks, to give him a little bread and water. The poor woman replied, in a most pathetic manner, that she had no more than one handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, and that she was about to partake of her last dinner with her two beloved sons, who must, afterwards, inevitably perish with hunger. The prophet, however, repeated his request, and assured her that her hospitality should be amply remunerated : " for," said he, " the barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth." Elated by this assurance, the widow conducted Elijah to her house, and rejoiced in the happy accomplishment of his prediction ; for while her neigh-

bours groaned beneath the heavy pressure of the famine, her cruse of oil flowed spontaneously, and her barrel of meal remained undiminished.

After the prophet had spent some time in this retirement, the son of his hostess sickened and died ; and the afflicted mother exclaimed in all the bitterness of anguish, “ O thou man of God, art thou come unto me to call my sins to remembrance, and to slay my son ? ” But the Deity vouchsafed to silence her complaints, and to set his seal, a second time, to the mission of her guest ; for, on Elijah’s taking the child into his own chamber, and interceding with God on his behalf, the corse was restored to life, and the enraptured widow was compelled to acknowledge, “ I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth.”

At the end of three years, Elijah presented himself to Obadiah, governor of Ahab’s house, and commanded him to acquaint the king with his arrival. Obadiah, who was a pious man, and had expressed an extraordinary zeal for God, by saving a hundred of his prophets from Jezebel’s fury, was much astonished at this command, and even ventured to remonstrate against carrying it into execution, “ for,” said he, “ there is scarcely a kingdom, or nation, from which Ahab has not exacted an oath to bring you to Samaria wherever you might be found.” However, on the prophet’s solemnly affirming that he would show himself to the king, Obadiah executed the message ; and such an interview took place as might naturally be expected between an impious monarch and a person of exemplary sanctity. After mutual invectives, however, Elijah obtained permission to assemble all the Israelites at

Mount Carmel, together with the priests of Baal, who were maintained at the queen's expense. He then reproved the multitude for halting between two opinions, and dividing their service between the God of their fathers and an abominable idol. "You see," said he, "that I am the only prophet of the Lord that have escaped destruction, while those of Baal are four hundred and fifty ; let them, therefore, offer a bullock to Baal, and I will offer up another to the God of Israel, and let the Deity who consumes his sacrifice by a miraculous fire, be henceforth the only object of your adoration." The people had no sooner expressed their approbation of this proposal, than the priests of Baal cut their bullock in pieces, laid it upon the altar, and called upon their god from morning till noon, when they began to cut themselves with knives, according to their superstitious custom, and leaped upon the altar which they had made ; while Elijah exhorted them to cry louder, and ironically observed that Baal, being a great god, would undoubtedly hear them, unless he were either asleep, or on a journey, or more particularly employed. At length the prophet reared up an altar of twelve stones, and laid the wood and victim in order upon it ; then, causing a deep trench to be dug around it, and the whole to be overflowed with water, he addressed himself in prayer to God, earnestly requesting that he would show himself to be the only God of the Universe. This petition was no sooner uttered, than a supernatural fire darted down from heaven, and consumed both the victim and altar, and even dried up all the water in the trench : in consequence of which phenomenon the people prostrated themselves on the earth, exclaiming "The Lord he is the God." This acknowledgement was imme-

diately followed by the destruction of the idolatrous priests ; but Jezebel vowed to take such ample revenge for the death of her favourites, that Elijah was again compelled to flee for his life.

In the eighteenth year of Ahab's reign, Benhadad, king of Syria, came against Israel, at the head of a formidable army, and laid close siege to Samaria ; but he was repulsed by a handful of men, and compelled to retire with great loss. In the course of the following year he attempted to retrieve his credit, but was again overthrown with terrible slaughter, and narrowly escaped being taken prisoner at the city of Aphek : however, on his sending a submissive message, Ahab received him with the greatest cordiality, and carried him in his own chariot to the royal pavilion, where they agreed on a mutual alliance. This circumstance was so displeasing to the Almighty, that, as soon as the vanquished prince had returned to his own dominions, a prophet was sent to tell Ahab, that his own life should assuredly pay for that of his enemy, which he had unjustly spared.

Some time after the conclusion of peace with Syria, Jezebel caused one Naboth, a Jezreelite, to be falsely accused, and stoned to death, because he had refused to sell a vineyard which the king had desired to convert into a garden of herbs. But whilst Ahab was taking possession of the ground, the prophet Elijah came to him from God, and solemnly affirmed, that dogs should lick his blood where they had recently licked that of Naboth ; that Jezebel should be literally devoured by the same kind of animals ; and that all his posterity should be utterly exterminated. This awful prediction sunk so deep into Ahab's mind, that he immediately

rent his clothes, returned home in evident confusion, and expressed such unfeigned contrition, that the threatened calamities were graciously suspended till his decease.

The Syrians having, in violation of the late treaty, wrested Ramoth Gilead from Israel, Ahab resolved to force that important place out of their hands ; and accordingly requested the assistance of Jehoshaphat, who had at this time honoured him with a visit. The king of Judah readily acceded to the proposal, but expressed a wish that God might be consulted respecting the issue of the proposed battle. Accordingly four hundred prophets were assembled, and unanimously assured the king that his arms should be crowned with success : but Micaiah, the son of Imlah, being solemnly questioned in the name of his God, replied, that the expedition would prove unfortunate to the troops, and fatal to their leader : for that the Deity had permitted the other prophets to be possessed with a lying spirit, in order to facilitate the execution of his judgments. Ahab, however, paid no attention to these assertions, but marched with all possible expedition to the field of battle, where he was mortally wounded by an arrow from an unknown hand. In consequence of this accident a retreat was sounded by the Israelites, and the king's body was carried to Samaria, where his ensanguined armour and chariot were publicly washed, and where the dogs licked his blood, according to Elijah's prediction.

B. C. Ahaziah, who succeeded his father in the 896. kingdom, happened to be so materially hurt, in the course of the next year, by a fall, that he was seriously alarmed for the event, and sent a deputation to inquire of Baalzebub, the idol of Ekron, respecting his

recovery ; but the messengers were stopped in this journey by Elijah, and sent back with an assurance, that since their master had sent to the God of Ekron, as if there had been no God in Israel, he should never leave his bed till he was carried out of it for interment. The king desired his servants to describe the man who had sent them back with this mournful sentence, and upon their telling him that it was a hairy man, girded with a leathern girdle, he knew him to be Elijah, and expired soon after, according to his prophecy.

B. C. 889. Jehoram succeeded to the throne of his deceased brother ; and prevailed on Jehoshaphat to assist him against the Moabites, who had rebelled, and refused to pay their tribute in the preceding reign. The confederate armies took a compass of seven days' march through the desert of Edom, in the hope of effecting their design by surprise ; but the enemy had assembled a powerful body of forces ; and Jehoram was so greatly distressed for water, that both himself and his followers were in imminent danger of perishing with thirst. In this exigence, however, Elisha, the famous successor of Elijah, obtained a miraculous supply, by a land flood, which not only removed the existing inconvenience, but enabled Israel to gain a decisive victory : for the Moabites, seeing the water look like blood, by reason of the reflection of the sun, and supposing that their adversaries had turned their arms against each other, ran hastily to the camp, in order to secure the spoil ; but were soon repulsed with considerable loss, and pursued to the very gates of Kir Hasereth, where the Moabitish king offered up his own son as a burnt sacrifice, in order to deprecate the anger of imaginary gods, and to prevent the ruin of his country.

The idolatrous practices and ceremonies which defiled the kingdom of Israel during this reign, provoked the Almighty to bring Benhadad, king of Syria, against Samaria, at the head of a formidable army, which soon reduced the inhabitants to such extremities that an ass's head was sold for eighty pieces of silver, and other articles in proportion. How long this siege had lasted we cannot determine ; but what might increase its evil effects was, that the famine had begun some years before in the country, insomuch, that Elisha was occasionally obliged to obtain a miraculous supply for the sons of the prophets, till the Syrian army forced him into the city. The extremities to which Samaria was now reduced were of so dreadful a nature, that the king began to impute the public distress to Elisha, and, after some time, determined to put him to death : but the prophet convinced him of the injustice of his suspicions, and assured him that, on the next day, there should be an abundant supply of provision in Samaria.

This prediction was immediately accomplished : for some lepers, who lodged on the outside of the gate, being led by hunger to the Syrian camp, found the tents full of baggage and provisions, but totally evacuated by the soldiers. Accordingly they brought the pleasing intelligence to Samaria ; and the king, after some hesitation, sent out a small party, who found that the enemy had really * fled, and left their tents, horses and other articles behind them.

* It appears that the Syrians, having heard an extraordinary noise of chariots, horses, and armour, in the night, supposed that Jehoram had hired the forces of Egypt, and other nations to assist him ; and this supposition diffused such an universal panic through the camp, that they fled in the utmost confusion, without even stopping to mount their horses.

The Israelites were accordingly enriched with all the enemy's spoil, and the famine was turned into such an extraordinary plenty, that a measure of fine flour was sold for one shekel, and all other provisions at a proportionate rate in Samaria. At the same time a nobleman, who had ventured to ridicule the idea of such a circumstance, and had been answered by Elisha that he should see it without tasting it, was trampled to death at the gate of the city.

Some time after this memorable event, Jehoram, having heard of Benhadad's death, and Hazael's usurpation, resolved to attempt the reduction of Ramoth Gilead ; and with the assistance of Ahaziah, accomplished his design : but he was so desperately wounded in the attack that he was obliged to return to Jezreel, and to leave Jehu, one of his captains, in care of the new conquest.

Meanwhile Elisha sent one of the young prophets to Ramoth, with instructions to anoint Jehu privately, and to tell him that he was appointed to execute the Divine vengeance against the idolatrous Jezebel, and all the rest of Ahab's ungodly family. Jehu, having received this important message, and acquainted his companions with his unexpected elevation, rode with all speed to Jezreel, and slew Jehoram at the vineyard for which Naboth had lost his life. The king of Judah was also involved in Jehoram's fate ; and Jezebel, being thrown from a window in the palace, was trodden under foot by the horsemen, and afterward devoured by dogs. After these exploits, Jehu wrote to the governors of Samaria, who had seventy of Ahab's sons under their protection, desiring them to set one of the bravest of their princes upon the throne, and to make preparations

for establishing his title ; but they rightly guessed the meaning of this message, and determined to sacrifice Ahab's descendants rather than incur the resentment of Jehu. Upon the intimation of this design, he commanded them to send all the heads of the young princes to him, in baskets, by the next morning ; and, on receiving the horrid present, he appeared at the gate of Jezreel, to remind the people of God's denunciation against the house of Ahab, and to justify his own proceedings.

Having taken ample vengeance on this impious family, together with their idolatrous priests and counsellors, Jehu set out on his journey to the metropolis ; and, in his way, met with forty two princes of the house of Judah, whom he immediately caused to be slain, and then invited Jehonadab to accompany him to Samaria, that he might witness his zeal for the restoration of his Maker's worship.

On his arrival at Samaria he issued out a proclamation, whereby he commanded all the votaries of Baal to assemble at a solemn feast in honor of their idol, and at the same time enjoined the worshippers of the Lord to remain at home. The idolatrous multitude assembled with alacrity at the appointed time : but the temple was no sooner filled, than a detachment of soldiers massacred them without mercy, demolished their images and other ornaments, and appropriated the building to an use, which fixed a perpetual stigma on its former god.

This zealous obedience to God's injunction, was followed by an assurance, that Jehu's posterity should sway the sceptre over Israel to the fourth generation : but the new king imprudently adopted many of Jeroboam's reprehensible practices, and permitted the gold-

en calves at Dan and Bethel to remain unmolested ; in consequence of which, Hazael was permitted to ravage his territories with unrelenting cruelty. He is said to have died after an unfortunate reign of twenty eight years, and to have been buried in the capital of his kingdom.

Upon the demise of this prince, the sceptre devolved to his son Jehoahaz, who persisted in all the impious courses of his predecessors, and paid so little attention to the Divine commandments, that God chastised him severely by the hand of the Syrians ; and his actions, during a reign of seventeen years, were of so little importance, that the sacred historian has passed them over in silence.

Jehoash ascended the throne upon his father's death, and took the earliest opportunity of visiting the prophet Elisha, who was then on his deathbed, and who assured him that he should gain three successive victories over the Syrians. Some time after this visit the king received a defiance from Amaziah, who had received some injuries from a party of Israelitish troops during his expedition against Edom. But the answer which he returned was couched in the most mortifying terms, under the allegory of a contemptible thistle, which having aspired to an alliance with the cedar, was crushed by the feet of a wild beast. Amaziah, however, resolved to give battle to his adversary ; but victory decided in favour of Israel, and the men of Judah were obliged to ransom their unfortunate prince at the expense of all the gold and silver that could be collected either in the temple or the royal treasury at Jerusalem. The victor then demolished a considerable part of their fortifications, and returned triumphantly to Samaria.

B. C. About a twelvemonth after this splendid
 825. achievement, Jehoash died, and left the government to his son Jeroboam, who seemed ordained by Providence to restore the kingdom to its pristine splendor, and who was encouraged to that glorious work by the prophets Jonas and Hosea. Accordingly he fought with extraordinary success against the Syrians, made himself master of their capital, and diffused the terror of his name through all their territories. But though his reign was rendered peculiarly glorious by his brilliant and numerous conquests, yet it is branded in the sacred history on account of the idolatries, luxury, rapine and injustice with which it abounded, and for which Amos, and other prophets were sent to denounce the most awful judgments against Israel, even to its total dispersion. This prince swayed the sceptre forty one years, and at the expiration of that time he died, and was buried in the royal sepulchre at Samaria.

B. C. After an interregnum of eleven years and a
 772. half, Zechariah, the great grandson of Jehu, ascended the throne of Israel ; thus fulfilling the Divine prediction, that Jehu's family should enjoy the kingdom till the fourth generation ; but from the accession of this prince we may date the downfall of Israel, as the subsequent history presents a melancholy spectacle of treasons, murders, and every species of anarchy. Zechariah had scarcely worn the crown six months before he was assassinated by Shallam, the son of Jabesh, who seized the government, and, after a reign of thirty days, was himself murdered by Zechariah's general in the metropolis.

Ménahem, having dispatched this usurper, took the administration into his own hands, and commenced his

reign with an act of unparalleled cruelty : for the city of Tirzah having held out against him, he caused all the male inhabitants to be put to the sword, and exercised the most wanton barbarities upon the defenceless and unresisting females. He was soon after alarmed by the approach of an Assyrian army, and compelled to purchase a shameful peace at the rate of one thousand talents of silver. This circumstance seems to have cooled his martial enthusiasm, for no farther notice is taken of him till the time of his death, when the crown devolved to his son Pekahiah.

Of the reign of Pekahiah we have no satisfactory account, except that he adhered to the idolatries of his predecessors, and that, after a short reign of two years, he was assassinated by one of his own generals, named Pekah, who seized on the vacant throne ; but whose nefarious practices entailed misery upon his people, and embittered his own reign with many calamities. He had the mortification to see one entire tribe torn away from him by a foreign power : and, notwithstanding his extraordinary success against the king of Judah, his dominions were filled with discord and rebellion, and after a troublesome reign of twenty years, his life was terminated by assassination.

Hoshea, the son of Elah, ascended the throne on the murder of his sovereign : but his government proved so disagreeable to the Israelites, that he found it a difficult task to establish himself in his ill acquired dignity. At the expiration of nine years, the public commotions began to subside ; and the king undertook to shake off the yoke of the Assyrians ; but this attempt involved both himself and his subjects in the most serious calamities ; for Shalmaneser, on the first intimation of

the purposed revolt, secured all the land of Moab ; ravaged that of Israel with fire and sword ; and led his victorious forces to the very gates of Samaria. The king had fortified himself so well in the city, that near three years elapsed before the besiegers could effect their purpose, but at length the ill fated metropolis was taken and rased to the ground ; the most shocking cruelties were exercised upon the inhabitants without distinction of age or sex ; and the unfortunate king, together with his surviving subjects, were led into captivity by their merciless conquerors.

B. C. Such was the punishment which the Israelites
721. brought upon themselves by disobedience to their God ; and such was the sad catastrophe of their kingdom, after it had existed two hundred and fifty four years from its foundation by Jeroboam.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Kingdom of Judah, from the accession of Rehoboam to its final Catastrophe under Zedekiah.

B. C. 975. **R**EHOBOAM finding it impracticable to reduce the revolted tribes to obedience, applied himself to the fortification of his greatest cities, and built several considerable places in Judah and Benjamin ; all of which he secured with strong garrisons, and stored with arms and ammunition.

By this method he began to acquire a considerable reputation ; and the unexpected return of the Levites and many others who abhorred the idolatrous practices of Jeroboam, tended greatly to augment his political importance : but he had scarcely reigned three years, before he forsook the service of God, and degenerated into a worse idolater than his revolted rival. In consequence of this shameful apostacy, Shishak, king of Egypt, was permitted to reduce several of his strong places, and to chase his wealthiest subjects into the metropolis, which soon fell a prey to the hostile army. The conqueror, having stripped the temple and palaces of all their most valuable ornaments, retired triumphantly to his own dominions, and left the son of Solomon to bewail the awful consequence of his impiety. Rehoboam reigned about twelve years after this disaster ; and, at the expiration of that time, left the crown to his son Abijam.

B. C. 958. The new monarch had no sooner assumed the insignia of royalty, than he resolved to lead his forces against the king of Israel. Accordingly, the two armies met upon the borders of Ephraim ; and Abijam upbraided his competitor with the baseness of his extraction, and with his baser actions ; observing, that he had unjustly deprived his master's son of the largest share of his kingdom, and had endeavoured to establish himself in his ill acquired dignity, by debauching the people from the worship of their Creator. Jeroboam, instead of acknowledging the justice of these remarks, caused a detachment to wheel round and surprise his enemy in the rear, whilst he himself should attack him in front. This base artifice threw the men of Judah into great confusion ; but they at length recovered themselves, and gained a victory, which proved peculiarly unfortunate to Jeroboam.

On the demise of Abijam, the sceptre devolved to Asa, a prince of so religious a disposition, that he spent the first ten years of his reign in purging the kingdom from all idolatrous statues and ceremonies ; and even deposed his own mother, for causing a grove to be consecrated to the worship of some heathen deity. He also made some admirable regulations in his army ; erected several fortresses in various parts of the land ; and adorned the temple with a quantity of gold and silver vessels, in lieu of those which had been carried off by the Egyptians.

B. C. 941. About fourteen years after his accession, his dominions were suddenly invaded by Zerah, the Ethiopian, with a numerous army of Cushites ; but victory declared on the side of justice ; and the invaders were defeated with prodigious slaughter. A consider-

able portion of the booty was devoted to the service of God ; and the king had the satisfaction of seeing multitudes of discontented Israelites flock to his metropolis, with offers of future allegiance. Some time after this victory, Baasha formed a confederacy with the king of Syria, against Judah : but Asa contrived to dissolve this alliance, and prevailed on Benhadad, by magnificent presents, to turn his arms against the king of Israel. Toward the close of his reign, Asa appears to have been rendered fretful and impatient, by a violent distemper in his feet ; and to have exercised an unjust severity on several of his subjects. However, he died in peace, and his body was interred with the most magnificent solemnity.

B. C. Jehoshaphat succeeded his father, in the thirty
914. fifth year of his age, and gave the most convincing proofs of his zeal for the true God, by pulling down all the groves and idols which had escaped the vigilance of his predecessor ; by causing a certain number of priests and Levites to instruct all his subjects in the law of Moses ; and by patronizing the worship of his Creator on every occasion. Nor was he less attentive to the political safety and happiness of his people : for he fortified all the frontier towns, and recent conquests ; maintained an army which consisted of a million valiant men ; and took such wise precautions for the support of his dignity, that the Arabians and Philistines voluntarily became his tributaries ; and most of the adjacent nations sought his friendship and alliance. Indeed, the greatest part of his reign was devoted to the administration of justice, the promotion of trade, and the abolition of idolatry. He is blamed, however, by the sacred historian, for not totally destroying the high places, and for suffer-

ing his son Jehoram to marry Athaliah, the ungodly daughter of Ahab.

We have already noticed the visit which this prince paid to the king of Israel, and the result of the battle at Ramoth Gilead : it is, therefore, only necessary to add, that Jehoshaphat narrowly escaped the vengeance of the Syrians ; and was reproved by a prophet, in the severest terms, for having consented to assist on such an occasion. However, he soon retrieved his error, by a more strict application to the promotion of religion and the welfare of his people : and his pious zeal was so acceptable to God, that when Judah was suddenly invaded by a prodigious multitude of Moabites, Ammonites, and other heathenish nations, Divine Providence appeared in so signal a manner on his behalf, that the invaders being seized with a kind of phrenzy, perished by their own swords, and their sumptuous spoils were carried in procession to Jerusalem ; while the air resounded with the harmony of musical instruments and the appropriate hymns of the Levites. Shortly after this event, Jehoshaphat breathed out his spirit into the hands of his Maker, and left the government to his son.

B. C. 889. Jehoram had no sooner ascended the throne, than he began to introduce all the abominable superstitions which his pious father had so carefully abrogated ; thus bringing upon his own family all the curses that had been pronounced against that of his father in law ; and thus exposing a whole nation to the heavy wrath of God. However, his enormities did not long remain unpunished, for the Edomites and the inhabitants of Libnah soon shook off his yoke ; the Philistines and Arabians invaded his dominions, and despoiled his me-

tropolis of all its riches; and the king himself was seized with a distemper of so terrible a nature, that his bowels came out, after an indisposition of two years, and he died in the extremity of agony.

Ahaziah, the son and successor of this prince, suffered himself to be guided entirely by the counsels of his idolatrous mother; and consequently adopted all the wicked practices of his predecessor. His friendship was therefore sought by the king of Israel; and he was easily persuaded to lend his assistance for the reduction of Ramoth Gilead: but that expedition proved fatal to himself and his family; for he was slain, by Jehu's adherents, at the ascent of Mount Gur; and forty two of his relations, who were going to pay a visit to the house of Ahab, shared a similar fate.

This circumstance inflamed Athaliah with such a thirst of vengeance, and filled her mind with such abhorrence both of the race and God of David, that she madly determined to exterminate the one and invalidate the promises of the other. However, whilst she was taking an ample revenge on the poor remains of the house of Judah, young Joash was providentially conveyed to the temple, and educated with the utmost privacy till he was seven years old; when Jehoiada, the high priest, resolved to produce him, in order to put a stop to the tyranny of the queen, and to convince the people that God had still preserved one branch of David's race from destruction. Accordingly, having conveyed some of the elders of Judah into the temple, he presented the young prince to them, and conjured them to exert themselves valiantly in his defence. This unexpected discovery produced the desired effect; and the elders used such dispatch, that in a few days they had

a formidable army at their command ; the young monarch was solemnly crowned and anointed, amidst a numerous train of armed Levites ; and the temple resounded with acclamations of “ Long live king Joash ! ” Athaliah, alarmed at this noise, rushed into the priests’ porch, and rent her garments in despair, at the spectacle which presented itself to her view : but she was immediately hurried out, and sentenced to expiate her numerous crimes by a violent death.

B. C. 878. This important revolution was immediately followed by a thorough reformation both in the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of the kingdom ; and the demolition of all the temples, altars, and monuments which Athaliah and her predecessors had caused to be erected. Strangers, apostates, and all unclean persons were also prohibited from appearing at the celebration of divine worship ; and voluntary contributions were received for the purpose of repairing the dilapidations of the temple. The venerable high priest exerted himself on every occasion to augment the zeal of his prince and the felicity of his nation : but he had no sooner submitted to the mortal condition, than the base chiefs of Judah petitioned for the restoration of their old worship ; and new altars were immediately erected to the gods of the heathen.

In consequence of this apostacy, several prophets were raised up, to rebuke the unthinking multitude ; and the high priest Zechariah boldly reproved both the king and his nobles : but all their remonstrances proved ineffectual, and the pious son of Jehoiada was stoned to death, in the very court of the temple. However, these enormities did not long remain unpunished ; for Hazael, king of Syria, led a numerous army into Judea, which soon pillaged the temple and metropolis of their choicest

treasures ; and made a dreadful slaughter among those nobles who had been the first authors of the defection. Joash escaped the fate of his counsellors, by yielding his riches submissively to the invaders ; but he was, soon afterward, smitten with a sore disease, and was murdered by his own servants, in the fortieth year of his reign.

Amaziah ascended the throne in the twenty fifth year of his age, and gave immediate orders for the execution of his father's murderers. The commencement of his reign was pious and equitable ; but in consequence of his extraordinary success against the Edomites, he was puffed up with pride, and became so fond of the idols which he had taken from his enemies, that he caused them to be set up in Judah, at his return ; and even presumed to utter some insolent menaces against a prophet whom God had commissioned to reprove him for his apostacy. This reprehensible conduct involved him in misery and disgrace ; and about fifteen years after the signal defeat which he received from the king of Israel, a conspiracy was formed which terminated in his assassination.

B. C. Azariah succeeded to the crown on the death
810. of his father ; and by the advice of an able politician, named Zechariah, he rendered himself equally amiable to his subjects and terrible to his enemies. His piety, conquests, economical arrangements, and excellent institutions reflected the highest lustre on the nation ; while the discipline of his army, and the strength of his fortifications, seemed to bid defiance to invasion ; but he unfortunately lost both his fame and dignity, by presuming to infringe upon the priestly office, and to burn incense upon the sacred altar. The high priest,

with eighty other zealous ministers of the temple, remonstrated, in the warmest manner, upon the impropriety and danger of such an attempt ; but the infatuated prince persisted in his folly, till he was suddenly smitten with a leprosy, and consequently obliged to quit the city. Struck with remorse for his presumption, he resigned the crown to his son Jotham, and resided in a solitary house, without the gates of the city, till the sixty eighth year of his age, when he paid the debt of nature, and was buried in a sepulchre adjoining that of his ancestors.

Jotham, the son and successor of Azariah, is represented as a just and religious prince, who inherited all his father's virtues without any of his failings ; and who constantly kept in view the glory of his God and the happiness of his people. He gained some important advantages over his enemies, during a glorious reign of sixteen years ; and expended a considerable sum on the metropolis and temple.

On the demise of this illustrious character, the government devolved upon his son Ahaz, whose impieties rendered his reign as unfortunate and contemptible as that of his father had been glorious and successful. He had scarcely established himself in his new dignity, before he was thrown into the utmost consternation, by the sudden approach of the armies of Syria and Israel ; and expected nothing less than the final destruction of the Jewish monarchy. But the prophet Isaiah was sent to assure him, that his fears were groundless, and that the confederate princes should try their strength in vain against Jerusalem.

Notwithstanding the visible interposition of heaven upon this occasion, Ahaz acted with the basest ingrati-

tude toward his God, and even exceeded the worst of his predecessors in idolatry and profaneness ; in consequence of which, the king of Israel was permitted to massacre a hundred and twenty thousand of his subjects,* besides his son Maseiah, and many of his nobles ; whilst the Edomites and Philistines ravaged other parts of the country, reduced several frontier towns, and carried a prodigious number of the inhabitants into captivity.

In this exigence, Ahaz prevailed on the king of Assyria, by magnificent presents, to make a diversion in his favour ; but as he still persisted in his transgressions, and even caused the holy temple to be defiled with an idolatrous altar, his affairs continued in a state of distraction till the time of his death, and his fame was so effectually tarnished by impiety, that the elders of Judah refused to deposit his body in the sepulchre of David.

The darkness which had overspread the nation during the sixteen years of this prince's reign, was effectually dispersed at the accession of his son Hezekiah, and the worship of God was solemnly restored amidst the acclamations of the true worshippers. The temple, which had been for some time shut up, was opened with the most magnificent solemnity ; circular letters were sent to every part of the kingdom, inviting all the inhabitants to assemble at the ensuing Passover ; images, altars, and other idolatrous monuments, were demolished in every part of Jerusalem ; the several

* The Israelites had also taken two hundred thousand captives, whom they were leading to Samaria : but at the instigation of the prophet Obed, they sent them back to Jerusalem, with some marks of compassion and humanity.

classes of priests, Levites, and musicians, were regulated according to the institution of David ; and various other arrangements were made, which tended to discountenance vice, and to encourage the practice of piety. This vigorous conduct on the part of Hezekiah was soon followed by the happiest consequences ; for the metropolis was crowded with worshippers, not only from various parts of Judah, but also from the kingdom of Israel ; the feast of the Passover was celebrated with extraordinary pomp ; and the congregation were inflamed with such zeal for the God of their fathers, that even the brazen serpent, which Moses had set up in the wilderness, was broken to pieces as an object of idolatry.

In consequence of his attention to the worship of his Creator, and the administration of justice, Hezekiah was blessed with such abundant prosperity, that he was soon enabled to attack the Philistines, and to recover all the places which they had wrested from his predecessor. Elated with this success, he resolved to assert his independence, and accordingly refused to pay the customary tribute to Assyria : but this attempt drew upon himself so formidable an invasion, that he was obliged to send a submissive message to Sennacherib, acknowledging his error, and promising to submit to such terms as he might choose to impose. This expedient, accompanied with some magnificent presents, induced the invader to retire, without inflicting any other penalty than an annual tribute of three hundred talents of silver, and thirty of gold.

The peace thus dearly purchased, was soon violated by the Assyrian monarch ; who not only sent a powerful army into Judea, but even commanded his generals, Rabсарis, Tartan, and Rabshakeh, to lay close siege

to Jerusalem, and to reduce the inhabitants to the utmost extremities, unless they yielded themselves prisoners of war. In this emergency, Hezekiah fortified the metropolis ; laid in an ample store of provision, arms, and ammunition ; caused the course of the brook Gihon to be turned, in order to distress the enemy for water ; and earnestly exhorted his subjects to rely upon Divine Providence, instead of suffering themselves to be dismayed by the strength or number of the besiegers.

Whilst the requisite preparations were making in the city, Hezekiah was seized with a dangerous indisposition, and exhorted, by the prophet Isaiah, to prepare himself for death. However, on the king's addressing himself in fervent prayer to God, this dispensation of Providence was set aside for fifteen years, and the Deity vouchsafed to declare, that Jerusalem should be surely delivered from her formidable enemies. As a confirmation of these important promises, the sun's shadow was permitted to return backwards ten degrees, upon the dial of Ahaz ; and at the expiration of three days, Hezekiah was happily blest with convalescence.

The generals of the Assyrian army now presented themselves before the walls, and demanded a parley with the ministers of Hezekiah ; who, accordingly, appeared on the battlements, attended by a multitude of people. Rabshakeh then addressed them in an insolent speech, filled with the most bitter invectives, not only against the king, but the God of Judah. This address, accompanied with the most dreadful menaces was well calculated to terrify the besieged, and was accordingly succeeded by a deep silence ; but the haughty invaders were suddenly compelled to march into their own

country, in order to repress an irruption of the Ethiopians.

This circumstance, however, gave but little comfort to the men of Judah; for Sennacherib sent a letter to Hezekiah, assuring him that if he still refused to submit to captivity his metropolis should soon be reduced by a more powerful army than had hitherto appeared in Judea; and he should have cause to repent his confidence in a God who would prove as impotent as the gods of all other nations had proved against the terror of the Assyrian arms. The king had no sooner perused this threatening epistle, than he went to the temple, and spread it out before his Maker, earnestly imploring him to accomplish his late gracious promise, and to vindicate his honor against a wretch who had audaciously numbered him among the heathen idols. Accordingly the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to assert, that God would espouse the cause of his people, and that the proud Assyrian should be soon compelled to retire to his own dominions, where he should receive the due reward of his impiety.

Sennacherib, having gained a decisive victory over the Ethiopians, returned to execute his threatened vengeance upon Jerusalem: but before he had opened a single trench, or discharged one arrow, God sent a destroying angel into his camp, who, in one night, destroyed a hundred and eighty five thousand of his bravest soldiers. This unexpected judgment alarmed the proud monarch so effectually, that he immediately returned to his capital, where he was, soon afterward, assassinated by his own sons.

Hezekiah appears to have been elated with this deliverance, beyond the bounds of prudence; for he soon afterward made an ostentatious display of his wealth to

some ambassadors whom Merodach Baladan had sent to congratulate him upon his success, and to make some inquiries concerning the recent prodigy of the sun's retrogression. This rash action was so displeasing to God, that the prophet Isaiah was immediately charged with a heavy denunciation, importing that those very Babylonians who had been entertained with a sight of all the royal treasures, should, in a short time, return to plunder the kingdom, and to carry the king's descendants captive to Babylon. This sentence had such an effect upon the royal offender, that he readily acknowledged his error, and expressed his gratitude for that Divine mercy which permitted him to close his eyes in peace. After a pious reign of twenty nine years, Hezekiah died in full possession of his people's love, and his obsequies were performed with a magnificence suitable to his illustrious character.

B. C. 698. Manasseh was but twelve years of age when he succeeded his father in the government ; but the very commencement of his reign was a tissue of cruelty, sacrilege and profligacy, and he soon acquired the character of an infamous and sanguinary tyrant. Not contented with restoring the worship of Baal, offering incense to the host of heaven, and commanding his subjects to sacrifice their unoffending babes to the detestable idol Moloch, he introduced the vilest ceremonies into the temple, and even erected " a graven image of the grove," in the most holy place, as if he had resolved to drive the God of Judah from his habitation, and to disclaim all the gracious promises that had been given, on various occasions, to Abraham and his descendants.

These enormities were boldly reproved by several of the prophets, and the most awful denunciations of Divine wrath were frequently uttered against their abandoned author : but instead of effecting the desired purpose, the government became more severe, the true worshippers were exposed to the most cruel persecution, and the metropolis was converted into a scene of carnage and distraction : the most horrid butcheries were committed every day, and prophets, priests and nobles were cut off without discrimination, till the Deity was at length provoked to deliver the tyrant into the hands of the Assyrians, who carried him in chains to Babylon, and threw him into a dungeon.

In this pitiable situation, the Jewish monarch began to reflect on his transgressions ; and the remembrance of his enormities produced such a genuine repentance in his breast, that his sighs and prayers obtained forgiveness from that God whom he had so often insulted. The period of his imprisonment, and the means of his liberation are passed over in silence by the inspired historian : but it appears that his heart was effectually changed, and that he took the earliest opportunity of redressing all grievances in his kingdom, by cleansing the temple, demolishing the heathenish statues and altars, restoring the ancient service, and repairing the fortifications of the city. He seems to have enjoyed the regal dignity about thirty three years after his return from Babylon ; and is said to have died, peaceably, in the sixty seventh year of his age. His body, however, was interred in his own garden, as his former crimes had rendered him unworthy of the royal sepulchre.

B. C. At the period of this monarch's death, the
643. worship of God was performed with equal purity and splendor, and the generality of the people had shaken off the practice of idolatry ; but Amon, the succeeding prince, abandoned himself to all the impieties of the heathen, and gave some convincing proofs that he designed to overturn all the recent regulations which had been made by his father. He was taken off, however, by assassination, before he had reigned two years, and the crown devolved upon his son Josiah.

The gross depravity which had infected the men of Judah, during the short reign of Amon, was so universal, that it required nothing less than a miracle to reform it. But Josiah had been promised, above three hundred years before, to effect a complete reformation ; and his conduct verified the inspired prediction.

In the sixteenth year of his age, this amiable prince issued out orders for the demolition of all idolatrous statues and altars, and the pollution of every place that had been consecrated to the gods of the heathen. The graven images, vessels, chariots, and other objects of superstition, were accordingly burnt to ashes, and strewed over the graves of their votaries ; and those that could not be destroyed by fire, were thrown, with every mark of contempt, into the river Kidron.

These abominations being removed from Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, and the valley of Hinnom, the king proceeded to Bethel ; and destroyed the golden calf, which had been erected by Jeroboam, together with the groves, idols and altars. The bodies of the idolatrous priests were also dug up and burnt ; but a particular regard was paid to the ashes of the prophet who had denounced to Jeroboam that destruction of idolatry

which Josiah was now fulfilling. In short, the new sovereign made a circuit through all the cities of Israel and Judah, and returned to his capital with the matchless satisfaction of having restored the worship of God in both kingdoms. He then caused the dilapidations of the temple to be repaired ; enjoined his subjects to celebrate the Passover with becoming solemnity ; banished all wizards and necromancers from his dominions ; instituted courts of justice in various parts of the land ; and charged the magistrates, priests and Levites to enforce obedience, on all occasions, to the law of Moses.

Notwithstanding these excellent regulations, and the ardent zeal of the young monarch for the honor of the holy religion, the majority of the people were still idolaters in their hearts ; and gave such frequent proofs of the reluctance with which they obeyed the royal mandates, that God commissioned the prophet Zephaniah, and the prophetess Huldah, to predict the total destruction of their temple and kingdom ; and, at the same time, resolved to take the pious prince from the world, that his eyes might not be shocked with the dreadful retribution of his people's crimes.

B. C. In the thirty first year of this reign, Pharaoh 610. Necho, king of Egypt, advanced against the Babylonians as far as Carchemish, in the vicinage of the Euphrates ; and the king of Judah led out a numerous army to oppose his progress. The two monarchs came within sight of each other at the valley of Megiddo, and Pharaoh solemnly assured his opponent, that he had no hostile design either against him or his dominions : but Josiah persisted in his resolution of giving battle, and, accordingly received a wound which terminated his mortal existence, in the thirty ninth year of his age. His remains were interred at Jerusalem,

amidst the lamentations of all his good subjects, and several learned men have supposed that the "Lamentations of Jeremiah" were written in consequence of his death.

Josiah had no sooner received the rites of sepulture, than his youngest son Jehoahaz, was seated upon the throne, by a powerful faction ; but his impieties and profligacy were so provoking to the Almighty, that Jeremiah was sent to threaten him with a severe punishment ; and, at the expiration of three months, he was dethroned by Pharaoh Necho, and carried, with many other captives, into Egypt.

Jehoiakim was permitted to ascend the vacant throne, on condition of paying an annual tribute to Egypt ; but, instead of humbling himself before God, or attempting to reform the manners of his people, he adopted all the reprehensible practices of his unfortunate brother, and consequently brought down new calamities upon his distracted kingdom. The prophet Jeremiah exerted himself, on various occasions, to convince the impious monarch and his subjects of the danger to which they exposed themselves ; but he was thrown into prison for presuming to condemn their conduct ; and the denunciations of Divine vengeance which he had been commanded to write in a roll, were contemptuously burnt in the royal apartment. The most horrid cruelties were also perpetrated under the eye of government ; the administration of justice was shamefully perverted ; and even the magnificence of the court resulted from violence and oppression. For these enormities, Jeremiah was commanded to assert, that the king should be delivered into the hands of his most formidable enemy, that he should die unpitied, and that his body should be exposed to rot upon the ground.

This tremendous prediction was soon accomplished ; for Nebuchadnezzar, having defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, led his victorious army against Jerusalem, which was pillaged of all its treasures, and involved in the most dreadful calamities. Jehoiakim was permitted to retain the sceptre, in consequence of his humble submissions and promise of a regular tribute ; but at the end of three years he violated his engagement, and incurred the heaviest effects of Nebuchadnezzar's vengeance ; for Judea was immediately ravaged by a fresh army ; the metropolis was again converted into a scene of slaughter ; upwards of three thousand individuals were dragged into captivity ; and the murdered body of their prince was left unburied without the gates of Jerusalem.

B. C. 599. Jehoiachin succeeded his father in the government ; but his actions were so displeasing to the Deity, that the sceptre was wrested from his hands in less than three months, by the king of Babylon, who sent him and his whole court into captivity ; rifled the temple, palaces, and treasury, a second time ; and transported eleven thousand soldiers and artificers into his own dominions, leaving the dregs of the people under the government of Mattaniah, the uncle of Jehoiachin, whose name was now changed to Zedekiah.

The new monarch continued faithful to Babylon for several years, and by that means preserved the regal dignity ; but being, at length, persuaded to join the Moabites, Ammonites, and other nations, in a revolt against Nebuchadnezzar, he hastened the punishment of his own crimes, and the dissolution of his kingdom. When the enemy had ravaged the greatest part of Judea, reduced his strongest fortresses, and laid close

siege to his capital, this infatuated prince perceived the fatal consequence of his imprudence, and sent to consult the prophet Jeremiah, whose advice he had hitherto treated with unparalleled contempt. His fears were, for some time, removed, by a diversion which Pharaoh Hophra made in his favour ; but Nebuchadnezzar soon returned with augmented fury, and the city was involved in the united calamities of war and famine. In this exigence Jeremiah exhorted the king to submit to his resistless invaders ; but, instead of following this advice, he attempted to make his escape, by night, with all his guards and nobles, and was immediately taken by the enemy. Nebuchadnezzar, hearing of this circumstance, caused all the children of this unhappy monarch to be butchered in his presence, and then ordered his eyes to be put out, that no other object might obliterate the recollection of that tragical scene.

The Jewish metropolis held out, for two years and a half, against the most strenuous exertions of the enemy, and the effects of a dreadful famine ; but at the expiration of that time it was reduced, and despoiled of all its riches ; the temple of Solomon was reduced to ashes ; the fortifications were demolished ; and most of the buildings were rased to the ground ; while the wretched Zedekiah and the majority of his surviving subjects were led away, captive, into Babylon. The prophet Jeremiah, however, escaped the general fate, and obtained permission to reside with Gedaliah, whom the Chaldean monarch left as governor over the miserable remnant of the Jews in Palestine.

Thus were the repeated denunciations of God's vengeance accomplished on a disobedient and idolatrous

people ; and thus was the Jewish monarchy subverted, after it had stood three hundred and eighty eight years from the accession of Rehoboam, and one hundred and thirty four years from the destruction of Samaria by the Assyrians.

CHAPTER IX.

From the return of the Jews out of Babylon, to the death of Nehemiah.

B. C.
536. **A**FTER the Jews had bewailed their transgressions, in a captivity of seventy years duration, as had been foretold by the prophet Jeremiah, Cyrus the Great issued out a decree by which they were permitted to return to their own country ; and to rebuild the edifice which God had vouchsafed to honour with his immediate presence, till reiterated defections had called down his vengeance upon the ungrateful sons of Abraham. The sacred utensils, which had been taken away by Nebuchadnezzar, were also delivered to one of the Hebrew chiefs, and those Jews who wished to remain in their new habitations, were permitted to contribute, as liberally as they pleased, to the necessities of their brethren, and the restoration of their ancient worship.

Upon the promulgation of this edict, the chiefs of Judah and Benjamin assembled together with the Levites, priests, and all who retained a zeal for the God of their progenitors, and made preparations for their journey ; while the rest of their brethren declined the expedition, and contented themselves with making contributions of gold, silver, and other materials, for the erection or embellishment of the city and temple.

The number of those who returned to Judea, under the conduct of Zerubbabel, a prince of the royal blood, and Jeshua the high priest, amounted to forty nine thousand eight hundred and ninety seven individuals, including seven thousand three hundred and thirty seven servants of both sexes, and two hundred male and female singers. This, however, was but a small proportion of the Jewish captives, and the love of their country was so far forgotten by the majority, that only four of the sacerdotal classes consented to quit the dominions of their oppressors.

On their arrival at the ruined city of David, the priests subdivided themselves in such a manner as to make up their original number of classes ; the Levites, and other officers of the temple, took up their abode either in or near Jerusalem, that they might be at hand to assist in the arrangement or restoration of holy things ; and the rest of the people employed themselves in searching for their brethren, whom the Babylonian conquerors had left to cultivate the adjacent country.

On the first day of the month Tishri, the new year was solemnly proclaimed by sound of trumpet, and was followed by two other great solemnities, namely, the grand fast of expiation, which was to be observed on the tenth, and the feast of tabernacles which began on the fifteenth, and continued till the twenty second of the same month.

At the last of these solemnities it was unanimously resolved to begin the important task of rebuilding the temple ; and a contribution was immediately made, which amounted to seventy five thousand five hundred pounds, besides a hundred costly vestments for the use of the priests. Cedar and other timber were also procured from Libanus and Tyre, and workmen were hired

from various parts to prepare the materials for the building.

B. C. In the second month of the ensuing year, the
534. foundation of the temple was laid in the presence of Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the whole congregation. This ceremony was accompanied with vocal and instrumental music, and the air resounded with triumphant acclamations: but whilst the younger part of the assembly uttered these expressions of rapturous delight, many of the senior priests and Levites who had seen the sumptuous edifice that was destroyed by the Chaldeans, could not forbear uttering many bitter lamentations when they considered the inferiority of the present design; so that the groans of one party, and the acclamations of the other, could not easily be distinguished.

Whilst this great work was carrying on, the Samaritans, who had been sent from Cuthath to repeople their native land, expressed an earnest desire to assist in completing the building; but, the Jews having declined this proposal, they laid aside the mask of friendship and sought, upon every occasion, to distress and vilify their new neighbours. In consequence of their malicious suggestions, Cyrus began to look upon the Jews with an eye of jealousy, and the decree which had been issued out in their favour was suspended, during the residue of his reign and that of his successor. At the decease of Cambyses, fresh complaints were carried to the court of Persia; and the building of the temple which had been hitherto carried on amidst numerous insults and obstructions, was totally stopped. However, on the death of the usurper, the people were inspired with fresh ardor by the prophet Haggai, and the sacred structure began to rise apace in spite of every opposition.

The Samaritans, exasperated at this circumstance, applied to Tatnai, governor of Syria and Palestine, warning him of the danger that might result from the restoration of a city which had frequently given just cause of alarm to the surrounding nations. Hereupon Tatnai repaired to Jerusalem, and demanded by what authority the work was carried on; but the answers which he received, effectually calmed his apprehensions; and a new decree was, soon afterward, promulgated by Darius, which not only ratified the grants that had been made by Cyrus, but also threatened all persons who should presume to obstruct it, with the heaviest pains and penalties.

The Jews, being now delivered from their enemies, and receiving a considerable bounty from the royal treasury, laboured with such alacrity and expedition, that their temple was finished in the sixth year of Darius; and the dedication was performed, in the month Adar, with all imaginable splendor and solemnity.

The Samaritans were so highly exasperated at the edict which enjoined them to pay a certain quota toward the rebuilding of the temple, and the diurnal sacrifices that were to be offered for the prosperity of the king and his dominions, that they took an early opportunity of withholding their tribute, on pretence that it was to cease as soon as the sacred edifice was finished. But Darius, having received a deputation from Jerusalem, issued out a fresh decree which confounded the malice of the Samaritans, and incapacitated them from giving further disturbance to the objects of Divine favour.

From this time the Jews enjoyed a profound peace under their royal patron, and under the reign of his successor: being governed by their own high priests

in matters of religion ; and in affairs of state by princes of the house of Judah, who were, however, subject to the king of Persia, and subordinate to his governors on this side the Euphrates.

In the reign of Artaxerxes, or Ahasuerus, the husband of Esther,* a learned Jew, named Ezra, obtained an ample commission to return to Judea with as many of his countrymen as were desirous of accompanying him ; and to make all needful regulations in the civil and ecclesiastical concerns at Jerusalem. The zealous descendant of Aaron gladly embraced so favourable an opportunity ; and, having assembled about two hundred and twenty Nethinims, with some priests and Levites, he implored the Divine blessing by fasting and prayer, and set out on his return to the holy city.

On his arrival at Jerusalem, he opened his commission before the Jewish congregation, and delivered into the hands of the priests, several offerings which had been made by the Persian monarch and his nobles.

* Esther was a beautiful orphan of the tribe of Benjamin, brought up and adopted by her uncle Mordecai ; who, by his constant attendance at the palace gate, seems to have been one of the king's porters, and who had found means to introduce his niece into the palace among other virgins that were designed as candidates to succeed the late queen of Persia. This damsel captivated the king so effectually, even before he had placed the diadem upon her head, that she prevented the massacre of her countrymen, which had been contrived by the malicious Haman, and turned the impending calamity upon the head of its wicked author. Her uncle, having detected a conspiracy against the king's life, was also elevated to the summit of grandeur, and carried in procession round the royal city ; and it is supposed that queen Esther obtained the commission, by virtue of which Ezra paid so beneficial a visit to Jerusalem.

He then sent to apprise the governor of Syria and Palestine of the power he had received from the king ; and immediately applied himself to the discharge of his duty, by appointing judges who might try and punish all who presumed to offend against the Mosaic law ; by setting forth a correct edition of the sacred books ; by revising the Jewish liturgy ; and restoring the worship of the temple to its original purity. He is also supposed to have changed the old Hebrew character for the more beautiful Chaldee, and to have appended such matter to the sacred history as was requisite for the explanation or perfecting of the original text. He governed the Jewish church and state, for the space of thirteen years, with equal honor and integrity ; and breathed out his spirit into the hands of his Maker, in the hundred and twentieth year of his age.

B. C. Nehemiah, a Jew of great learning and piety, ^{445.} who had been promoted to the office of cup bearer at the court of Persia, obtained a commission to succeed Ezra* in the government of Jerusalem, and to make such repairs or alterations in the city and temple as should be deemed requisite. Accordingly he proceeded with all possible expedition to Jerusalem, and finding both the house of God and the fortifications in a dilapidated condition, he assembled the elders of the people, and informed them of the power he had received from the Persian monarch. He then gave directions for the rebuilding of the city wall, and attended the labourers so closely, that their important task was completed in little more than seven weeks, notwithstanding

* Nehemiah appears to have visited Judea in the time of Ezra ; but we have given their transactions separately, the better to preserve the thread of the history.

the discouragements they received from the Samaritans, and an opposition which eventually compelled them to take up arms in their own defence.

While this work was carrying on, Nehemiah was apprized of many acts of cruelty, which had been practised, before his arrival, on the poorer classes of the people ; insomuch that those who now bore the greatest share of the labor had been driven to the sad necessity of mortgaging their lands, selling their children, and submitting to many other hardships. Hereupon he reproached the Jewish rulers for their inhumanity and covetousness ; and exerted himself with such extraordinary zeal on behalf of the oppressed, that their complaints were hushed to silence, and the Samaritans beheld with unspeakable regret the dedication of the new wall, and the augmenting felicity of the citizens.

Hitherto the city of David remained but thinly peopled, as the majority of the Jews who had returned from Persia had taken up their residence in the circumjacent country. Nehemiah, therefore, prevailed on the noble and opulent, to build themselves houses within the walls, in order to elude the thieves and banditti who infested other parts of Judea ; he next gave a general invitation for all to settle there who should approve of the situation ; and finally took every tenth family by lot ; so that the city, being thoroughly repaired and peopled, began to resume something of its original splendor. Having made these necessary arrangements for the safety of Jerusalem, Nehemiah next applied himself to the regulation of the people, from whom he extorted a general confession of their transgressions, and a solemn vow to rectify whatever was amiss in future, particularly respecting intermarriages, the observation of sabbaths

and sabattic years, the annual tribute for the repairs and support of the temple ; and the punctual payment of tythes, first fruits, &c. for the maintenance of the Levites. This solemnly concluded with a general contribution for the service of the temple, in which the governor himself gave five hundred and thirty two priestly vestments, fifty dishes, and a thousand drachms of gold. He then returned into Persia, according to promise, after administering justice to his countrymen for the space of twelve years.

The exemplary conduct of this personage might have naturally produced much pious emulation among a people who were not only the objects of God's peculiar favor, but who had seen such tremendous chastisements inflicted upon the impenitent. But such was the aptitude of the Jews to vice and profligacy, that during their governor's absence, which lasted but five years, they had degenerated so shamefully from his precepts, as even to defile their temple, to neglect the performance of their most important ceremonies, and to profane the sabbath, by threshing their corn, exposing their mercantile wares to sale, and bartering with foreigners, in open contempt of Haggai, Malachi and Zechariah, whom God had commanded to remonstrate on the absurdity of their behaviour. On Nehemiah's return, however, these scandalous abuses were corrected ; the public worship was restored to its pristine purity and regularity ; and frequent lectures were given out of the Holy Scriptures both in Jerusalem, and all the other towns of Judea.

The length of Nehemiah's life after this important reformation, and the place of his sepulture are equally unknown : but Josephus informs us that he died in an

advanced age ; and we are assured, by the sacred historian, that his character was rendered truly illustrious by his zeal for religion ; and that the dignity of his office was admirably supported by his princely munificence and hospitality.

After his death the government of Judea was joined to the prefecture of Syria, from which the high priests received their authority. A circumstance which induced many persons to aspire to the sacerdotal dignity through motives of ambition, and which consequently, involved the Jewish nation in many calamities.

CHAPTER X.

Continuation of the Jewish affairs, from the end of the Old Testament, to the Birth of our Saviour.

AS we can gather no farther information from the canonical books, respecting the affairs of Judea, from the demise of Nehemiah till the birth of Christ, we must necessarily fill up the chasm between the Old and the New Testament, from the books of the Maccabees, and the justly admired works of Dr. Prideaux, and Josephus. And from these sources we hope to draw such a continuation of events, as may give our juvenile readers a connected and perspicuous view of the sacred history.

B. C. About thirty four years after the accession of 373. Artaxerxes Mnemon to the throne of Persia, an unfortunate dispute arose, at Jerusalem, between the high priest, Johanan, and his brother Jeshua, respecting the sacerdotal dignity,* and Johanan in attempting to thrust his opponent out of the temple, gave him a mortal wound. In consequence of this accident, Bagoses, the governor of Syria, upbraided the Jews with defiling the temple of their God ; and, having forcibly entered into the inner court, imposed a heavy fine upon the priests.

* Bagoses seems to have promised Jeshua a grant of the high priesthood some years after Johanan's investiture ; and it was in attempting to take possession of the pontifical office that Jeshua lost his life.

B. C. 351. Shortly after the death of Artaxerxes, a heavy chastisement was inflicted on the Jews by the hands of Ochus, who, having reduced the greatest part of Phœnice, led a numerous army into Judea ; took the city of Jericho by assault ; and carried off a considerable number of the inhabitants, some of whom he sent into Egypt, and others to Hyrcania on the Caspian sea. About ten years after this event, Johanan was succeeded, in the high priesthood, by his son Jaddua ; and the Persian diadem devolved, soon afterward, upon Darius Codomannus.

The Jews gave an extraordinary proof of their loyalty toward this prince, in the fourth year of his reign ; for they positively refused to assist Alexander the Great, in the siege of Tyre, and resolutely withheld a supply of provisions which he had demanded for his army. The Macedonian hero was so highly incensed at this conduct, that he took the earliest opportunity of leading his victorious troops against Jerusalem : but, being received by a number of priests in their sacerdotal robes, and being likewise struck with a solemn procession of the inhabitants, he laid aside his purposed revenge ; caused a considerable number of victims to be offered to the God of Israel ; and indulged the Jews with many privileges and immunities.

The impression of a dream,* and the prophecies of Daniel, which had been shown to him by the high priest, induced Alexander to settle a great number of Jews in his new city, which was called after his own name,

* Alexander declared that, during his abode in Macedonia he had seen the Jewish high priest, in a vision of the night, encouraging him to pursue his expedition against the Persians, and assuring him of complete success.

Alexandria; where they received permission to worship God after their own mode, and to claim an equal share of all the franchises and liberties that were enjoyed by the Macedonians. Many of them had, indeed, nearly lost his favour, by refusing to assist at the rebuilding of an idolatrous temple : but he was, at length, convinced of the rectitude of their conduct, and therefore, sent them back into their native land.

Upon the demise of this celebrated warrior, his empire was divided among four of his generals ; and Judea, being situate between Egypt and Syria, became subject to all the wars and revolutions that attended such a partition of territory. It was, at first given, together with Syria and Phœnice, to Leomedon the Mitylenian ; but afterward wrested from him, and invaded by Ptolemy Soter, who made himself master of Jerusalem on a sabbath day, and carried nearly a hundred thousand persons captive into Egypt. However, in consideration of the loyalty which they had evinced toward their former conquerors, he intrusted several of them with the care of his most important fortresses, and eventually confirmed all the privileges which their nation had formerly received from the Macedonians.

B. C. Ptolemy was soon compelled to resign Judea
312. to his powerful enemy Antigonus ; but, at the same time, contrived to reserve some Jewish cities, and to carry off a prodigious treasure, together with a multitude of the inhabitants, whom he encouraged to settle in Alexandria.

Seleucus, observing the good effects that resulted from Ptolemy's clemency toward the Jews, prudently resolved to offer them an asylum in Asia Minor : and, accordingly, planted such considerable colonies of them in his

new cities that they soon began to spread themselves over his dominions, and formed so considerable a portion of his subjects that he deemed it advisable to cultivate their friendship, and to treat them, upon all occasions, with such a degree of kindness as might conduce to the preservation of their loyalty, and the aggrandizement of his own power.

Whilst this prince rendered himself popular by a well timed munificence, Antigonus was universally detested for his fierceness, perfidy and tyranny ; and the province of Judea, being almost depopulated by repeated migrations of the Jews into Syria, was easily recovered by the king of Egypt.

About this time the Jewish high priest Simon, died, in the ninth year of his pontificate.

He had succeeded his father, Onias, in a time of great confusion ; and his conduct had been uniformly marked with such piety and integrity, as induced his contemporaries to honor him with the surname of “ the Just.” His name was also rendered illustrious by that ardent love of his country which he demonstrated, on various occasions, by repairing the dilapidations of the holy temple and city ; completing the canon of the Old Testament ; and promoting the worship of his Creator both by precept and example. This justly famous character was the last member of the Great Synagogue ;*

* The Great Synagogue consisted of a hundred and twenty elders, who in a regular succession, after the expiration of the Babylonish captivity, laboured assiduously in restoring the Jewish church and state ; and exerted themselves to diffuse an accurate knowledge of the Holy Scriptures among their brethren.

and at his decaese the high priesthood, devolved on his brother Eleazar.

B. C. On the demise of Ptolemy Soter, his successor 284. Philadelphus, confirmed all the privileges which had been granted to the Jews ; and even conferred greater obligations upon them than they had ever received from his father, in order to obtain a copy of their sacred books to be translated into the Greek language, and deposited in the royal library of Alexandria. Several other princes endeavoured to ingratiate themselves with this nation, about the same time ; and Antiochus Theos prudently resolved to bind the Jews of Ionia to his interest, by granting them all the franchises of the native inhabitants.

Ptolemy Euergetes, having succeeded to the throne of Egypt, and having dispossessed his rival, Antiochus, of the provinces of Syria and Cilicia, visited the capital of Judea, and offered a profusion of sacrifices as a token of gratitude for his recent victories.

Soon after this period, Manasses the uncle of Simon, succeeded to the high priesthood ; but he died, in less than two years, and left his dignity to Onias, a man of a base and avaricious spirit, who devoted the greatest part of his time to hoarding up riches, and who, by indulging this insatiate thirst of gain, exposed the Jewish state to the indignation of the Egyptian monarch. However, his nephew, Joseph, undertook to pacify the prince, and his exertions were crowned with such success, that Judea was happily delivered from the expected chastisement. Onias was succeeded in the priesthood by his son Simon, who was justly celebrated for his zeal and piety ; and who gave some extraordinary proofs of conduct and courage in the first year of

his pontificate, which was marked by several hostile incursions of the Samaritans.

Ptolemy Philopator, having succeeded to his father's throne, and compelled Antiochus to relinquish an attempt on Palestine, resolved to visit the capital of Judea; and was so well pleased with the loyalty of the inhabitants, that he made several considerable presents to their priests, and caused a number of sacrifices to be offered at his own expense. His generosity, however, produced but a transient gleam of happiness; for he soon conceived an unconquerable desire of examining the interior of the temple, and actually forced his way through the outward courts in spite of the remonstrances of the priests, and the bitter lamentations of the people. But on his attempting to penetrate into the most holy place, he was smitten with inexpressible terror, and was obliged to be carried out by his attendants. So awful a judgment might have been expected to convince him of his error; but instead of bowing to the chastisement of Heaven, or acknowledging his transgression, he returned to Egypt, with a firm determination to wreak his vengeance on all the Jews who resided in his kingdom. However his barbarous design was in a great measure* frustrated, by the interference of that Adorable Being whom he had so grossly insulted; and he was, at length,

* We say "in a great measure" for, though the *most dreadful* evils were averted by Divine Providence. Philopator exercised many cruelties upon the Jews of Alexandria; such as, stripping them of all their ancient privileges, ordering them to be enrolled among the lowest order of Egyptians; causing them to be branded, by a hot iron, with the badge of his god Bacchus, and sentencing great numbers to slavery and death.

compelled to revoke the sanguinary decrees by which he expected to have destroyed an unoffending nation.

B. C. The persecutions which the Jews had sus-
 204. tained under this tyrant, induced them to throw off their allegiance to Egypt, at his decease, and to place themselves under the protection of Antiochus the Great, king of Syria. That monarch was so highly gratified with their submission and zeal, that he restored their metropolis to its ancient liberty and privileges ; gave a considerable sum out of his own treasury for the repairs of the temple, and the maintenance of public worship ; granted an exemption from all taxes, for three years, to all the dispersed Jews who should return to their capital ; and offered the inestimable blessing of freedom to all those who had been sold for slaves in any part of his dominions. These extraordinary acts of beneficence effectually captivated the affections of a people who had long groaned beneath an insupportable yoke ; and Judea might now be said to smile under the benign influence of its new master. About three years after this important revolution, the high priest Simon died, and was succeeded by his son, Onias III. whose justice, clemency, and exemplary piety were deserving of a better fate than he met with.

In the eighth year of this pontificate, the Jews were deprived of their royal patron : but his son Seleucus, continued to protect them in all their civil and religious privileges, and the expenses of their sacrifices were regularly defrayed out of the royal treasury, till an unfortunate misunderstanding took place between the high priest and the governor of the temple, which involved the Jewish nation in many calamities. This contest, which seems to have resulted from some disorders in the

city, grew to such a height, that Simon resolved to take an ample revenge on his opponent, and accordingly gave such an account of the sacred treasures to the governor of the province, that Seleucus determined to appropriate part of them to his own use, and, with this design, commanded Heliodorus to fetch them away to Antioch.

B. C. The king's messenger was received at Je-
176. rusalem with every mark of respect, and the pontiff readily acknowledged that there were certain treasures in the temple ; but, as they consisted entirely of consecrated utensils, or sums of money which had been bequeathed to the widows and orphans of the Jewish community, they could not possibly be removed from the house of God. Heliodorus, however, insisted upon executing his commission, and even ordered the gates of the temple to be broken down : but whilst the priests were striving to divert him from his purpose, and the people were sending up cries to heaven for the preservation of their sanctuary, he was suddenly overwhelmed with confusion by an awful vision, and soon afterwards quitted a city, which he acknowledged to be under the protection of some Divine and irresistible power. Simon now endeavoured to ruin the high priest by a new stratagem, and, accordingly charged him with having invited Heliodorus to Jerusalem ; but Onias justified himself without difficulty, from this impudent accusation ; and eventually procured the banishment of his treacherous rival.

B. C. Antiochus Epiphanes had no sooner assumed
175. the Syrian diadem, than Jason, the brother of Onias, went to Antioch, where he purchased the high priesthood for three hundred and fifty talents, and ob-

tained an order for the present pontiff to be sent to that metropolis. He also purchased a grant for erecting a gymnasium, or place of exercise, at Jerusalem ; and for making such Jews as would abjure their religion, free of the city of Antioch. Accordingly, on his return, he began to train up the Jewish youth in all the fashions of the Greeks, and encouraged the people, both by precept and example, to adopt the superstitions of their idolatrous masters. However, after he had enjoyed his ill acquired dignity for a few years, he was supplanted and driven from Jerusalem by his brother Menelaus, who had contrived to raise a powerful party at the court of Epiphanes.

The impiety of this wretch exceeded that of his predecessor ; for he not only used the most unwarrantable means to obtain the priesthood, and to bring about a general apostacy in Judea, but he even caused the holy vessels to be sold for the support of his extravagance ; and procured the death of Onias, because that pious man had rebuked him, at Antioch, for his abominable sacrilege.

Meanwhile Lysimachus, whom Menelaus had left in care of Jerusalem, practised so many extortionate and tyrannical arts, that the inhabitants were exasperated beyond endurance ; and an insurrection ensued, which terminated in the death of the oppressor, and the dispersion of his guards. A solemn deputation was then sent to the king, in order to deprecate his anger, and to charge Menelaus with having occasioned all the recent troubles both in Antioch and Judea. This embassy, however, proved totally ineffectual, for justice was perverted by the influence of gold, and the deputies, whose

pleadings might have softened the hearts of barbarians, were basely condemned to death.

Jason, on a false report of the king's death, marched to Jerusalem at the head of a thousand men, and chastised many of the Jews for their attachment to his rival ; but the approach of Antiochus compelled him to flee for his life ; and eighty thousand persons were inhumanly butchered or made prisoners by the Syrian troops, who were ordered to punish the supposed revolt with unrelenting severity. Not contented with inflicting this dreadful calamity upon Jerusalem, the impious monarch penetrated into the most sacred recesses of the temple ; tore off the golden ornaments ; carried away the holy treasures and utensils ; offered a large sow on the altar of burnt offering ; and, having confirmed Menelaus in the priesthood, left the unfortunate citizens to their own sad reflections.

B. C Two years had scarcely elapsed since this
168. dreadful event, before Antiochus renewed his cruelties, by ordering Apollonius, his collector of tribute, to massacre all the male inhabitants of Jerusalem ; to take the women and children captives ; and to pillage the city without distinction. This diabolical command was executed, on the sabbath, with such brutal severity, that the temple and synagogues were literally deluged with blood, the fortifications were demolished, many of the most stately edifices were reduced to ashes, and every species of ferocious cruelty was practised on the unresisting citizens. A castle, or fortress, was also built on a high hill opposite to the temple, that the Syrian garrison might overlook and annoy the poor remnant of Judah who might occasionally approach the

edifice, which had, in former times been visibly filled with the glory of their Creator.

Antiochus still thirsted for the blood of the Hebrews, and, accordingly, promulgated an edict, by which those unfortunate people were forbidden to circumcise their children, to offer sacrifices to the God of their fathers, or to continue any of their religious practices, on pain of the most dreadful punishments. He also ordered the temple of God to be dedicated to Jupiter Olympus, and caused the image of that idol to be set up upon the altar ; while all the other towns of Judea were defiled by idolatrous altars, groves and chapels. and the inhabitants were reduced to the most pitiable condition. However, the ministers of cruelty were frequently confounded by the intrepid firmness of their victims, and the cause of religion seemed to acquire fresh lustre from the death of every martyr.

The king was so exasperated at this circumstance that he resolved to visit Jerusalem in person, and enforce the execution of his sanguinary commands ; but neither his presence, nor the terror of his known cruelty could damp the heroism of the sufferers, or induce them to renounce the pure religion of their ancestors.

About this time, God vouchsafed to espouse the cause of his persecuted worshippers, and raised up some illustrious characters for the deliverance of Israel and the chastisement of their idolatrous oppressors. Mattathias, a priest of the family of Joab, who resided at Modin, was complimented by the king's officers, and tempted to establish the heathen worship in that city ; but instead of complying with this request, he slew one of his countrymen who had been persuaded to sacrifice to an idol ; killed the officer who came to enforce the

royal edict, and running through the streets, exhorted all who were zealous for the Divine law to follow him. Animated by the example of this man and his pious family, a great number of Jews determined to make a vigorous exertion for the recovery of their holy worship, and, accordingly, followed their venerable leader to one of the deserts of Judea, where they passed a decree for defending themselves against the enemy on the sabbath ; and exerted themselves to collect such a body of partisans as might enable them to make an attack upon the heathen gods and their self deluded votaries.

B. C. When they had received a sufficient reinforcement,^{167.} they marched out of their hiding place, and attacked both the heathens and apostate Jews with such irresistible fury, that the former were overwhelmed with consternation, and the latter were obliged to flee for their lives ; while demolished altars, prostrate images, and other works of superstition marked the triumph of truth and the returning effulgence of celestial light. Having thus rendered themselves dreadful to their Syrian and Jewish foes, the conquerors marched from city to city, cleansing the polluted synagogues, transcribing the sacred books, and restoring the worship of their Maker to its pristine order and purity.

After these important transactions had received many proofs of the Divine blessing, and a thorough reformation had begun to extend over a considerable part of Judea, Mattathias was arrested, in his glorious progress, by the angel of death. However, he had the satisfaction of leaving five valiant sons behind him, who entered into all his views, and engaged to follow his dying commands with scrupulous exactness.

B. C. 166. Judas Maccabeus, having performed the last mournful duties to his revered parent, put himself at the head of his little army, and led them to battle with such success, that many of the Syrian garrisons were driven from their posts, and the apostate Jews were compelled to make a precipitate retreat, while a prodigious number of pious emigrants returned to their native country, and cheerfully enlisted under the banners of the new general.

The alarm occasioned by these proceedings was so general, that Apollonius, governor of the province, deemed it advisable to raise a considerable force for the suppression of the rebellion. Accordingly he marched at the head of a formidable army against the Maccabean chief; but, instead of effecting his purpose, he received a mortal wound at the first onset, and his followers were defeated with dreadful slaughter. Seron, another of the king's generals was, also, overthrown by Judas, with the loss of eight hundred men; and such brilliant success attended the arms of the Maccabees, that Antiochus began to dread the total loss of Palestine.

In this posture of affairs, Nicanor and Gorgias, two captains of consummate experience, entered Judea at the head of forty seven thousand soldiers, and formed an encampment on the plains of Emmaus; while Judas had the mortification to be deserted by three thousand of his followers. The remaining troops, however, were so animated by his affectionate speeches, and unshaken confidence in God, that they rushed with undaunted bravery on the enemy, and obtained a decisive victory. Timotheus and Bacchides, two persons of great celebrity in the Syrian army, attempted to revenge their fallen countrymen; but they were routed

with prodigious loss ; and several of their most important fortresses fell into the hands of the conquerors.

The news of these extraordinary exploits alarmed Lysias, who had been entrusted with the government during the king's absence, and induced him to march, in person, against the insurgents. Accordingly, he proceeded, with sixty thousand infantry and five thousand cavalry, to Bethsurah, in the tribe of Judah ; but he was received with such courage, that five thousand of his men were cut to pieces, and the remainder were compelled to elude destruction by an ignominious flight. He, therefore, abandoned his enterprise for the present, and marched back to Antioch, in order to raise a more numerous army against the ensuing year.

Lysias had no sooner returned into Syria, than the victorious Maccabees marched to Jerusalem, which had been hitherto polluted with detestable idols and covered with ruins. The melancholy spectacle which they beheld at Mount Sion, produced the most lively emotions of grief in the whole army : but their valiant leader soothed the anguish of their minds, and exhorted them to set about the purposed restoration. Accordingly, a select number of priests began to cleanse the temple from the statues and other objects of Syrian worship ; artificers were employed to make an altar of perfumes, a table of shew bread, a golden candlestick and sacred vessels, in lieu of those which had been carried off by the heathen ; workmen were ordered to repair the dilapidations of the sanctuary with all possible dispatch ; and the bravest of the troops were appointed to guard all the avenues of the city. At length, the holy and most holy place being thoroughly repaired and purified, the divine worship, which had been intermitted for the

space of three years, was recommenced with all possible solemnity and magnificence.

B. C. The trumpets having sounded, at day break,
 165. the lamps were lighted ; the lamb, for the daily sacrifice, was offered ; the customary portion of incense was burnt on the new altar ; and all the other ceremonies, enjoined by Moses, were duly performed. Meanwhile the front of the temple was ornamented with a profusion of golden crowns and garlands ; the houses, likewise, were elegantly illuminated ; and the people bearing branches in their hands, expressed their gratitude to God in appropriate songs of praise. This festival was kept eight days, with equal joy and devotion ; and a decree was passed for its annual celebration by the whole nation.

The neighbouring nations were so violently exasperated at these proceedings, that they attacked the Jews on every side ; but their forces were repeatedly vanquished with prodigious slaughter, while the Maccabees acquired fresh courage and reputation.

Meanwhile, Antiochus, who was collecting his tribute in Persia, received the news of these events with the utmost indignation, and threatened to bury the whole nation of the Jews in the ruins of their metropolis and country. But he was immediately smitten with an incurable disease in his bowels, and expired shortly after, in unspeakable agonies.

Some time after the demise of this tyrant, Judas Maccabeus laid close siege to the tower of Acra, which had been built in Jerusalem, by Apollonius : but, some of the garrison having contrived to escape to Antioch, the young king advanced to their relief, at the head of one hundred thousand foot, twenty thousand horse,

thirty two elephants, and three hundred chariots of war. Judas, however, having attacked his enemy, in the night, slew four thousand and six hundred of their troops, and made a regular retreat to Jerusalem.

Antiochus Eupator, having reduced the fortress of Bethsura, led his army toward the Jewish metropolis, and besieged the sanctuary with such vigor that the garrison was reduced to the utmost extremities. But the report of a rebellion in Syria induced the besiegers to grant peace to a people whom they had resolved to exterminate. Antiochus promised in the most solemn manner, that the fortifications of the temple should remain untouched ; but on the cessation of hostilities he ungenerously caused them to be demolished.

Menelaus, the apostate high priest, had attended the Syrian army in this expedition, but Lysias having accused him of treason, he was condemned to be thrown into a tower of hot ashes. The Jews, however, had no cause to rejoice in the destruction of this enemy, for the pontifical dignity was immediately conferred upon Alcimus, who, like his predecessor, had made his court to the Syrians, by adopting their idolatrous practices.

On the accession of Demetrius to the crown of Syria, Alcimus went to Antioch to complain* of the Jews, and to request the interference of the court in his behalf. Accordingly, two armies were sent out, the one under Bacchides, and the other under Nicanor, governor of Judea ; but the designs of both were frustrated, and Nicanor, having uttered many blasphemous words against the temple, was punished with exemplary

* The Jews refused to admit Alcimus to officiate at their altar, on account of his known impiety, and attachment to the superstitions of the heathen.

rigor ; for he was not only slain in battle, but his head and right hand were suspended from one of the towers of Jerusalem, as an awful example of Divine retribution.

During the peaceful interval which followed these eventful transactions, Judas sent an embassy to Rome, and obtained an alliance with that powerful state, which seemed to promise the happiest consequences ; but, whilst this treaty was in agitation, Demetrius sent Bacchides into Judea with the flower of the Syrian army, in order to revenge Nicanor's death, and to establish Alcimus in the priesthood.

The approach of this army infused such an extraordinary terror into the hearts of Judas's followers, that, unmindful of their own credit, and their leader's preservation, they began to draw off in great numbers from the field of battle. Maccabeus was deeply afflicted at this circumstance, but still refused to retreat before the enemy ; and, having exhorted the eight hundred men who continued with him, to act with becoming gallantry, he broke the strongest wing of the idolatrous army, and chased the fleeing troops from Eleasa to Mount Azotus ; but being surrounded and overpowered by numbers, he fell, covered with honourable wounds, on a heap of his expiring enemies.

B. C. The Jews, being totally disheartened by this
 160. accident, became an easy prey to the conqueror, who speedily reduced their capital ; inflicted the severest punishments on the friends and adherents of the Maccabees ; and established Alcimus in the high priesthood. But the impious pontiff, having presumed to break down one of the walls of the sanctuary, was suddenly smitten with a dead palsy ; and the surviving brethren of Judas began to make some strenuous ex-

ertions against the cruel destroyers of their liberty and religion.

Jonathan, having succeeded his brother Judas in the government of the persecuted Hebrews, made so vigorous a resistance against the Syrians, and gave such convincing proofs of his conduct and resolution, that Bacchides soon grew weary of the war, and, at length, concluded a treaty, by which he solemnly engaged to refrain from further hostilities against the inhabitants of Judea.

The Syrian forces were no sooner withdrawn, than Jonathan commenced a regular government like that of the ancient Israelitish judges ; and made several important reformations both in the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of the kingdom. He also accepted the high priesthood with the unanimous consent of the people ; and, by espousing the cause of Alexander, against his rival Demetrius, he procured many solid advantages to his country. Having thus risen to a considerable height of political importance, and rendered himself truly formidable by a succession of martial exploits, he devoted the greatest part of his time to the aggrandizement of his own nation : but though he espoused the causes of different princes, upon various occasions, with extraordinary prudence and success, he was, at last, decoyed by Tryphon, into the city of Ptolemais, and basely assassinated, together with a thousand persons who attended him in the quality of guards.

B. C. Upon the report of this perfidious action, the
143. Jews were thrown into the utmost consternation and began to dread the most fatal consequences to their temple and country : but, having conferred the united dignities of general and pontiff on Simon, the

only surviving son of Mattathias, they made some formidable preparations for a defence, and caused the murdered bodies of Jonathan and his two sons to be interred, with due solemnity, at Modin.

Having made several needful regulations in Judea, and procured a ratification of an amicable alliance from Rome and Lacedæmon, Simon sent an embassy to Demetrius, the lawful heir of Syria, offering to acknowledge his sovereignty, and to assist him in dispossessing Tryphon of the regal dignity. These proposals were cheerfully accepted, and a letter was immediately returned, in which Demetrius constituted the Maccabiteish general, a sovereign prince of the Jews, and released his territories from all foreign dominion. This dignity, with that of the pontificate, being confirmed by the sanhedrim, Simon assumed the titles of "prince and high priest of the Jewish nation," and all public acts were ordered to be made in his name. He also reduced and demolished the tower of Acra; established Jerusalem in peace and plenty; beautified the sanctuary, and enforced obedience to the Divine laws upon every occasion.

Meanwhile, Antiochus Sidetes, having resolved to make an attempt on the crown of Syria, sent a very obliging letter to Simon, in which he confirmed all his dignities and revenues, and added many other privileges, particularly that of coining money, which were immediately embraced by the Jewish pontiff. Antiochus, however, seems to have been actuated entirely by selfish principles; for, on his ascending the throne, he broke his league with the Jews, and even ordered one of his generals to invade their country. But his designs were

happily frustrated by the vigilance of Simon, and the Syrian army was routed with considerable loss.

B. C. About three years after this event, Simon was 135. treacherously murdered at the castle of his son in law : and his two sons Judas and Matthias were involved in his unhappy fate. The vile author of this tragical deed had also sent an invitation to John, surnamed Hyrcan ; but he happily escaped the snare, and soon afterward succeeded his father in the government and high priesthood.

The Syrian monarch was no sooner apprized of Simon's death, than he marched into Palestine at the head of a numerous army, and laid close siege to Jerusalem, in order to revenge the defeat of Cendebeus : but, after some time, he consented to draw off his troops, upon condition that the Jews should demolish the fortifications of their metropolis, and acknowledge his sovereignty by the regular payment of an annual tribute. About this time Jesus, the son of Sirach, seems to have translated the book of Ecclesiasticus out of Hebrew into Greek, for the use of the Hellenistic Jews, resident in Egypt.

The intestine commotions which distracted the kingdom of Syria upon the death of Antiochus, gave Hyrcan a favourable opportunity of enlarging his borders, and of renouncing his allegiance to the Syrian crown. Accordingly he made himself master of several important places both in Phœnice and Arabia, and took such admirable precautions for their preservation, that the Syrians were unable to wrest them out of his hands. He also gained a decisive victory over the Edomites or Idumeans, and compelled all of that nation to abjure their idolatrous practices or to abandon their country ;

in consequence of which, they became incorporated into the Jewish commonwealth.

B. C. Having rendered himself formidable by these
126. successes, and by a new league of alliance with the Romans, Hyrcan turned his arms against the Samaritans with such resistless fury, that they were soon deprived of their strongest fortresses, and had the mortification to witness the demolition of Samaria, and of the idolatrous temple which Sanballat had erected, at their request, on Mount Gerizzim.

The Jewish prince now enjoyed his authority without disturbance, and continued to amass prodigious treasure by the revenues which arose from his own fertile territories, and by the tributes he received from the subjects of his recent conquests ; while the temple and commonwealth flourished with extraordinary splendor, and the most felicitous effects resulted, in every part of the country, from his equitable administration. His last days were indeed embittered by the leading men among the * Pharisees, and some vile aspersions were thrown upon his character by that restless faction : but he closed his life with honor, and his loss was sorely regretted by the generality of the nation.

Upon the demise of this celebrated Asmonean, the regal and sacerdotal dignities devolved upon his eldest

* The Pharisees, or Separatists, were so called on account of their pretences to superior holiness, or to an extraordinary observance of the Oral Traditions, which they affirmed were delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, and conveyed down through the several generations of the Jews from father to son. These were the persons whom our Saviour accused of having made the Law of God void by their traditions ; and it is upon the principles of this sect that the present religion of the Jews is founded, rather than upon the written laws of Moses.

son Aristobulus, who assumed all the insignia of royalty, which had been disused since the Babylonish captivity, and commenced his reign with several acts of despotic cruelty. His mother, having asserted her right to a participation of the government, was barbarously starved to death ; and all his brothers were thrown into confinement except Antigonus, who enjoyed the tyrant's favour for some time, but was eventually put to death upon an unjust suspicion. The Itureans, who inhabited the north easterly parts of Galilee, were attacked and vanquished in this reign, but the haughty conqueror had no cause of triumph ; for he was seized with a violent distemper, and the recollection of his enormities, produced a vomiting of blood, which soon terminated his successes and his life.

B. C. Alexander Janneus being now liberated from
105. prison, and placed on the vacant throne, led a powerful army against the city of Ptolemais ; expecting to reap some important advantages from the dissensions which, at this time, distracted the Seleucidæ : but whilst he was employed in this expedition, Ptolemy Lathyrus invaded his kingdom ; defeated his troops in the vicinage of the Jordan, and took ten thousand of his subjects captive. The Jewish prince, however, was enabled, by the assistance of Cleopatra, to ward off the blow which threatened to annihilate his power ; and, after some time, he retrieved his disgraceful loss, by some important acquisitions in the land of the Philistines.

Meanwhile the Pharisees, who detested him for enforcing his father's decrees against their constitutions, took every opportunity to vilify his government, and to exasperate the common people against him. In con-

sequence of these practices, a spirit of discontent began to appear in several parts of Judea ; and the citizens of Jerusalem began to hold their sovereign in such contempt, that, while he was officiating in his sacerdotal capacity at the altar, they pelted him with citrons, and insulted him with the most opprobrious language. These marks of disaffection soon ripened into an open revolt ; and produced a civil war, which in the space of six years, swept fifty thousand individuals to an untimely grave, and brought innumerable calamities upon each party.

Though Alexander gained several advantages over the rebels, he ardently desired a cessation of hostilities, and offered to make any reasonable concessions for their satisfaction : but as they peremptorily rejected his offers, and told him that the only way to oblige them was to terminate his own existence, he fell upon them with augmented fury, and, having cut off most of their troops in one decisive battle, chased the survivors to Bethome, and invested the city so closely as to preclude the possibility of their escape. The unfortunate objects of his resentment made a long and gallant resistance ; but, at length, fell into the hands of the king, who caused eight hundred of them to be carried to Jerusalem, and there crucified in one day. Their wives and children were also butchered before their eyes, while they hung on their crosses ; and the royal concubines were entertained with a sight of that inhuman tragedy.

B. C. Alexander, having inflicted this dreadful chastisement on his disobedient subjects, led his victorious troops across the Jordan, and achieved such brilliant conquests in Arabia, Gilead, and Moabitis, that the fickle Jews began to applaud his martial spirit ;

and the surrounding nations shrunk in terror from his arms : but his debaucheries visibly impaired his health, and threw him into a quartan ague, which occasioned his death, while he was besieging a castle belonging to the Gergesenes.

Alexandra, being appointed sole guardian of the young princes, Hyrcan and Aristobulus, and having consulted her dying husband respecting the future government of the state, made her court to the Pharisees, by resigning Alexander's corpse into their hands, and by promising to act upon all occasions, in conformity to their advice. By this submission she acquired a considerable degree of popularity, and established herself in her new dignity : but she was compelled to grant many exorbitant demands, to the manifest derogation of her prerogative ; and her latter days were embittered by many serious vexations. She died in the seventy third year of her age, and the ninth of her reign, and bequeathed the Jewish crown to her eldest son.

Hyrcan the Second had scarcely ascended the throne, before his brother, Aristobulus, raised a powerful army against him, and, in less than three months, compelled him to sue for peace, on the ignominious conditions of resigning his regal and pontifical dignities. But, by the assistance of an Idumean called Antipater, and of Aretas king of Arabia, the deposed prince was enabled to assemble a body of forces, which chased the usurper to the very precincts of the temple, and besieged him so closely, as to preclude any hope of escape.

B. C. In this posture of affairs, Aristobulus implored

65. the protection of the Romans ; and accompanied his petition with such large presents as effectually answered his purpose, and induced them to write to the

Arabian prince, commanding him to raise the siege. Aretas readily obeyed the injunction of the republic ; and Aristobulus, rushing from his *âsylum*, deluged the country with the blood of his enemies.

Some time after this event, the two brothers resolved to plead their respective causes before Pompey, who was then at Damascus, and accordingly implored his protection against each other, first by ambassadors, and afterward in person ; while the majority of the Jews clamoured against them both, and insisted on the total abolition of monarchy in their country.

Pompey heard each party with seeming equanimity, and dismissed them with an assurance that he would take an early opportunity of deciding their controversy ; but Aristobulus was so dubious of the event, that he quitted Damascus in disgust, and began to make formidable preparations for war. In consequence of this imprudent conduct he was loaded with chains, and thrown into prison, whilst the Roman general led his veteran troops into Judea, and took possession of the metropolis.

Though the gates of Jerusalem were readily opened by Hyrcan's party, yet the faction of Aristobulus took shelter in the temple, and resolved to defend themselves to the last extremity. Pompey, on the other hand, caused battering rams, and other engines of war, to be brought from Tyre, and after a vigorous siege of three months, made himself master of the place, by battering down one of the towers, and making a considerable breach in the wall. The besiegers, having thus surmounted every obstacle, sacrificed twelve thousand persons to their resentment, whilst others eluded their vengeance by enveloping their apartments in

flames or by precipitating themselves from the battlements of the temple. During these horrid transactions, the priests continued their devotions with perfect calmness, and suffered themselves to be butchered before the altar, without any resistance ; while the conqueror gratified his curiosity with a view of the sanctuary, and the holy vessels, and issued out an order for the demolition of the city wall.

When the invaders had satiated themselves with plunder and carnage, Pompey ordered the temple to be cleansed, and sacrifices to be offered according to the Mosaic institution. He also restored Hyrcan to his dignities, on condition of his paying an annual tribute to Rome ; appointed Scaurus governor of Judea, in order to prevent a future revolt ; and carried Aristobulus and his four children prisoners to Rome.

From this unhappy quarrel, therefore, between Hyrcan the Second, and his ambitious brother, we must date the final loss of the liberty of the Jews, and the translation of the sovereign authority to the Romans : for though Hyrcan was permitted to retain the high priesthood and the specious title of prince, he was deprived of the ensigns of royalty, and laid under a disgraceful tribute ; his dominions were unjustly reduced to narrower bounds ; and he was expressly forbidden to attempt any new conquests.

Whilst Hyrcan rejoiced in the supposed frustration of his enemy's designs, Alexander, the son of Aristobulus, found means to escape from Rome, and appeared in Judea at the head of a formidable army. Hereupon Hyrcan had recourse to his new allies, and persuaded them to suppress this new rebellion ; but, though he obtained his request, he had the mortification to witness

a total change of the Jewish government, and a fresh proof of the tyranny of the Romans. Some time after these transactions, Aristobulus obtained his liberty, either by artifice or bribery, and joined the malecontents in Palestine ; but his attempts, like those of Alexander, were rendered abortive, and he was carried back to the same prison, whence he had recently escaped.

B. C. A few years after this event, Julius Cæsar
49. gave Aristobulus his liberty, and sent him with two legions into Palestine, in order to overawe the Syrians, and to render him some occasional services against Pompey : but the Jewish prince was soon taken off by poison ; and his son, Alexander, was seized by Pompey's partisans, and decapitated at Antioch.

Meanwhile Antipater, having rendered some important services to Cæsar in the Egyptian war, was made lieutenant of Judea, and honoured with the freedom of Rome ; while the ancient alliance between Rome and Jerusalem was solemnly ratified, and a permissory decree was granted for rebuilding the wall which had been demolished by Pompey. At the same time Antipater procured the government of Jerusalem for his eldest son Phasaël ; and that of Galilee for his second son Herod, who swayed the Jewish sceptre at the time of our Redeemer's birth.

Upon the assassination of Julius Cæsar, Cassius assembled a powerful army, and began to levy large tributes upon Syria and Judea, the last of which he taxed at seven hundred talents. Herod and Phasaël eagerly embraced this opportunity of ingratiating themselves with the new governor, and raised their quota with extraordinary diligence ; but Malichus, who had been employed on the same occasion, was so tardy in the

execution of his commission that Cassius expressed the utmost indignation against him, and would certainly have doomed him to death, had not the pontiff stepped forward, with a considerable ransom, on his behalf.

This incident, together with his jealousy of Antipater, induced Malichus to take off his formidable rival by assassination ; but his plot was discovered, and he deemed it expedient to dissemble his resentment till a more favourable opportunity. Accordingly he went to Antipater, and earnestly conjured him to lay aside his suspicions ; but he had no sooner effected the desired reconciliation, than he bribed Hyrcan's butler to dispatch the object of his envy by poison. This enormity, however, did not pass unpunished, for Herod, with the permission of his new patron, Cassius, sacrificed the traitor to his just resentment.

Antigonus, son of Aristobulus, having obtained a body of cavalry from Parthia, and being joined by a multitude of discontented Jews, resolved to make a grand effort for the recovery of the kingdom ; and accordingly, advanced with his united forces to Jerusalem. Here he received such a vigorous repulse as obliged him to take shelter behind the fortifications of the temple ; but, by a treacherous artifice of Pacorus, cup-bearer to the king of Parthia, the aspect of affairs was suddenly changed, and Antigonus was invested with the supreme dignity ; whilst Hyrcan and Phasaël were deluded into a dungeon, and Herod narrowly escaped destruction by a precipitate flight. Upon this reverse of fortune, Phasaël beat out his own brains in an agony of despair ; and Hyrcan was incapacitated from officiating at the altar by an amputation of his ears.

Meanwhile, Herod, having preferred an unsuccessful petition to the king of Arabia, went to Rome, and pleaded his cause so powerfully before the conscript fathers, that a decree was passed for his succeeding to the throne of Judea, and the ceremony of inauguration was solemnly performed, in presence of Mark Antony, and Octavius Cæsar.

Thus dignified and patronised by the Romans, Herod returned to Judea, with a numerous body of forces, and reduced several places of importance. He also relieved his family, which had been closely besieged in the fortress of Massada ; and exterminated some bands of robbers who had long infested the mountainous parts of Galilee. These exploits were immediately followed by a signal defeat of Herod's partisans, and the entire revolt of Galilee : but the son of Antipater took an ample revenge on his enemies, and chased them to the very walls of Jerusalem.

B. C. Early in the ensuing spring, Herod, having
 37. formed a matrimonial alliance with the family of the Asmoneans, and having obtained a powerful reinforcement from the Romans, laid close siege to Jerusalem. The garrison made an obstinate resistance, and delayed the fate of their capital by several extraordinary exertions : but, at the expiration of six months, the place was taken by assault, and a scene of rapine and carnage succeeded, which may be easier conceived than described. Every street was ensanguined with the blood of its inhabitants ; every house was rifled by the victorious army ; and even the sanctuary would have undergone a similar fate, had not Herod interposed with his authority, and pacified the troops with a liberal donation.

Upon the entire reduction of the holy city, Herod was placed on the throne ; and the unfortunate Antigonus was carried in chains to Rome, where he was soon afterward put to death, at the instigation of his rival.

As Herod had obtained the crown by violence, he was compelled to establish himself by similar methods ; and the very commencement of his reign was marked with tyranny and blood. All the gold, silver, and other valuables belonging to the citizens were seized, and deposited in the royal coffers ; death and confiscation of estates were thundered out against the surviving adherents of Antigonus ; and even dead bodies were arrested, and pillaged previously to their interment. Aristobulus, the young high priest was drowned in a bath, at the king's instigation ; Hyrcan, who had imprudently returned from Parthia, was basely murdered at the advanced age of eighty years ; and Mariamne, a princess equally famous for her illustrious birth and exemplary virtue, was doomed to perish on a scaffold.

Judea, in the mean time, exhibited a melancholy picture ; being shaken by earthquakes, invaded by a rapacious host of Arabs, and languishing under the effects of a severe famine. Thousands of people were buried in the ruins of their own houses ; multitudes of cattle were destroyed or driven off by the invaders ; and every part of the unfortunate kingdom resounded with the groans of patient sufferers, or the execrations of malecontents. The religion of the country was also shamefully polluted by the introduction of several heathenish games and customs.

Notwithstanding the prompt execution of his tyrannic orders, and the rapid augmentation of his power, Herod

was involved in perplexities, and frequently overwhelmed with despair. The loss of his once loved and injured queen oppressed his spirits with a species of melancholy which admitted of no diversion ; a grievous pestilence, which swept off great numbers of his subjects, soured his temper still more ; and the frequent rumor of plots and conspiracies rendered him so outrageous, that he frequently sacrificed his dearest friends to his ungovernable fury.

B. C. Having amassed a prodigious treasure, by his
23. cruel extortions and confiscations, he proposed to rebuild the *temple ; and actually performed that important work with prodigious cost and splendor. But though the dedication of this elegant structure was performed with all imaginable magnificence, and universal rejoicings were made on the occasion, yet the populace regarded Herod as the author of all their calamities ; and the admiration of his public magnificence was lost in the contemplation of their private wrongs.

During the building of the temple, and several other public works, Herod was embroiled in perpetual quarrels with his two sons, Aristobulus and Alexander, whom Salome, the king's sister, had accused of treasonable designs ; and who, after several public trials and acquittments, were doomed to perish by the hands of an executioner. And the tyrant was so violently alarmed by fresh accounts of plots and purposed insurrections, that his heart was wrung with unutterable distress, and

* Our readers must observe that this edifice is not called the *third* but the *second* temple ; for, though it was built anew from the foundation, it was only by way of reparation, that of Nehemiah not having been demolished with a ruinous design.

his paroxysms of rage were expected to terminate in lunacy* or death.

About this time the temple of Janus was shut, to intimate that all the nations of the earth were at peace, and a decree was issued out for taking a general register of the Roman Empire ; upon which account, Mary, a virgin, of the lineage of David, went to Bethlehem ; and there brought forth the adorable infant, of whom the angel Gabriel had previously asserted that he should save his people from their sins, and to whom the prophet Isaiah alluded, when he exclaimed in prophetic rapture, " Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given : and the government shall be upon his shoulder ; and his name shall be called **WONDERFUL, COUNSELLOR, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER, and The PRINCE of PEACE.**

* In order to avoid an interruption of the history of the New Testament, we briefly observe, that Herod died by a dreadful complication of diseases, in the seventieth year of his age ; and left behind him four sons, viz. Archelaus, who succeeded him in the kingdom of Judea ; Herod Antipas, who obtained the tetrarchy of Galilee ; Philip, who was invested with the government of Iturea, and Trachonitis ; and Herod Philip, who married the princess Herodias, on whose account John the Baptist suffered decapitation. It is also proper to remark that Archelaus was deposed, for his tyrannical conduct ; and that Judea was reduced to the form of a Roman province, being governed by procurators, who were appointed and recalled at the pleasure of the reigning emperor. The power of life and death was likewise taken out of the hands of the Jews, and their taxes were regularly gathered by the publicans.

CHAPTER XI.

From the Birth to the Ascension of Jesus Christ.

WE are now arrived at an epoch the most interesting and important that ever marked the page of history, or excited the attention of mankind. A period at which the Sun of Righteousness arose, with healing in his wings, upon a benighted world, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel ; while the true worshippers of Jehovah rejoiced in the accomplishment of the ancient prophecies, and looked forward, with inexpressible delight, to that great day of atonement, in which the seed of the woman, should bruise the serpent's head.

A. D. The blessed virgin had no sooner brought
 1. forth her Divine Son, and laid him in a manger at Bethlehem, than the happy circumstance was announced, to some shepherds, by a host of angels, who exclaimed, in holy rapture, "Glory to God in the highest, Peace on Earth, and good will toward men : " and the Oriental magi, were conducted by a miraculous star to the new born king of Israel, whom they worshipped with becoming reverence, presenting unto him gold, frankincence, and myrrh.

The holy child, having been thus announced by his Father's angels, and adored by the wise men of the East, was carried, on the fortieth day, to the temple of Jerusalem, to receive the rite of circumcision, and to

be redeemed according to the Mosaic institution. On this occasion a venerable Hebrew, named Simeon, took him in his arms, and in a transport of holy gratitude exclaimed, "Now, Lord, let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." The prophetess Anna, a woman of exemplary piety, also began to speak of this Divine Babe, to all them who looked for the consolation of Israel ; and many devout persons rejoiced in the accomplishment of Micah's prediction. "Thou Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

The jealousy of Herod was roused by the first intelligence of our Redeemer's birth, and he earnestly conjured the Eastern magi to give him a particular information respecting the illustrious object of their search ; but they were warned by a celestial vision to shun his presence, and accordingly returned home without obeying his injunction. Hereupon the tyrant laid aside his dissimulation, and issued out an order for the destruction of all the male children, not only in Bethlehem, but in all the adjacent coasts, from two years old and under. However, his diabolical design was frustrated by an angel, who commanded Joseph (the reputed father of Christ) to retire with his family into Egypt. Upon the demise of Herod, the highly favoured exiles were recalled ; but as they dreaded the resentment of Archelaus, they turned aside into Galilee, and took up their abode at Nazareth.

A. D. When the Messiah had attained the age of
12. twelve years, he went up to Jerusalem, at the

feast of the passover, and surprised the doctors of the law, by asking such questions and making such remarks as clearly demonstrated his superior knowledge and wisdom, though his tender years and indigent condition precluded the possibility of his having profited so considerably by education. Whilst the Redeemer was thus employed, his mother and Joseph missed him from among their company, and sought him for three days, with restless anxiety, till at length they found him in the temple. He then told them that they might have supposed he was about his father's business, and went home with them to Nazareth, where he spent the remainder of his childhood in obedience and subjection. The ancients assert that he was brought up during this interval, to the trade of his reputed father ; and this opinion seems to be founded on fact, as Jesus himself in the New Testament is expressly called a carpenter.

In the fifteenth year of the emperor Tiberius, and during the pontificate of Caiaphas, John the son of Zecariah and Elizabeth, left the wilderness, where he had spent the greatest part of his youth, and began to preach the necessity of repentance and the kingdom of the Messiah. The novelty of this doctrine, and the remarkable austerity of John's life drew great multitudes of Jews to hear, and to be baptized by him in the Jordan ; and a considerable reformation began to appear among his adherents, whom he earnestly exhorted to lay aside all vain confidence, to conduct themselves with piety and decorum, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. The Pharisees, being apprized of these particulars, sent some of their priests to investigate the nature of his preaching and pretensions, upon which he replied that he was neither the Christ, nor the

prophet Elias, whom some supposed to have risen from the dead, but that he was merely the precursor of the Messiah ; or “ a voice in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord,” according to the inspired prediction of Isaiah. He also declared that though the Saviour came after him, yet he was not worthy to bear his shoes ; and that he only baptized with water, whereas Jesus would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

A. D. Shortly after this declaration, Jesus presented
30. himself at the bank of the river, in order to be baptized : and John humbly excused himself from that high office, but his remonstrances were silenced, and he administered the holy rite with becoming reverence. Upon their coming up out of the water the *Holy Ghost descended, in form of a dove, and rested upon the Redeemer’s head, while a voice from heaven proclaimed “ This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” And the Baptist embraced that opportunity of informing the people that this was the very Christ, and the Lamb of God, who should expiate the sin of the world.

Having thus received the rite of baptism, Jesus was led by the spirit into the wilderness, not only to endure temptation, and conquer the tempter, but probably to spend forty days in meditation and converse with his

* This was the clearest demonstration ever given to mortals of the existence of the HOLY TRINITY ; for though we are told that God (the Father) is a consuming fire, and that none can see him and live ; yet upon this solemn occasion, the voice of that God issued from the clouds of heaven, whilst his coequal son stood by the side of the Baptist, and the Holy Ghost rested visibly upon him, as a confirmation of his Divine nature and mission.

Heavenly Father, as Moses spent forty days with God, upon Mount Sinai, previously to his giving the sacred law to the Hebrews. In this retirement he was assaulted with three powerful temptations, but his infernal enemy was so completely baffled by as many appeals to the Scripture, that he was compelled to retire without effecting his purpose : and the victorious Messiah received a timely supply, after his long abstinence, from the hands of some angels who are expressly said to have come and ministered unto him.

In consequence of John's ample testimony, Andrew the son of Jonas, and Simon his brother, became the disciples of Jesus ; and these were soon joined by Philip and Nathaniel, who accompanied their blessed master to a marriage festival at Cana, in Galilee, where a miraculous transformation of water into wine, filled the company with admiration, and confirmed the faith of the new converts. From Cana the Redeemer went to Capernaum, a small city near the lake Gennezareth ; and from thence to Jerusalem, where he celebrated the passover, for the first time after his entrance into his holy ministry.

Upon this occasion he found the temple crowded with money changers, and people who sold cattle, poultry, and other things used in the Jewish offerings, whose trade and tables were a scandalous profanation of that holy place. He therefore reprov'd them, in the severest terms for their impiety, and drove them out with a scourge of small cords ; while his disciples recollected that it was written, " The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up ;" and many who saw the miracles which he did rejoiced in the fulfilment of Malachi's prediction. " The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his

temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in ; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver ; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness."

Jesus, having given many proofs of his divine mission, and having instructed Nicodemus, a venerable ruler in the fundamental doctrine of regeneration, went from Jerusalem into the other parts of Judea, and employed his disciples in baptizing the new converts. This ministry occasioned a dispute between them and the followers of John, respecting the number of their proselytes ; but the Baptist decided the difference in favour of his Adorable Master, affirming that he was from heaven and above all.

John's unaffected piety gained the admiration of most of the Jews, and procured him the friendship of Herod Antipas, who seems to have taken great pleasure in advising with him, and listening to his animated discourses. However, the tetrarch was so highly provoked at this holy person for his boldness in reproving him for an incestuous marriage, that he caused him to be thrown into prison, and eventually issued out an order for his execution at the instigation of the abandoned Herodias and her daughter Salome.

After a stay of about eight months in Judea, during which time he had healed a prodigious number of cripples and invalids, Jesus departed into Galilee, where he converted many of the inhabitants, and preached in their synagogues. The Nazarenes, however, were offended at the extraordinary wisdom of a man whom they knew to have had so mean an education among them ; and the reproof which they received on this account exasperated them so highly, that they rushed upon the Divine Object

of their resentment, and hurried him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, with an intention to throw him down headlong ; but, by an exertion of his celestial power, he eluded their malice, and retired unperceived to Capernaum, where he proclaimed the glad tidings of his gospel to attentive audiences, and where he demonstrated his omnipotence by healing a demoniac ; raising Peter's mother in law from a bed of sickness ; and restoring a prodigious multitude of diseased persons to health and happiness.

The report of these proceedings drew together so great a concourse of people, that when Jesus arrived at the lake Gennezareth, he deemed it expedient to get into a boat, belonging to Simon Peter, and to launch out from the shore, that he might be more conveniently heard and seen by the multitude. When he had concluded his discourse he desired Peter to cast out his net for a draught ; and, though the fishermen had toiled all night in vain, such a prodigious quantity of fish was immediately taken as had nearly sunk the boat. Hereupon Peter fell at the Redeemer's feet, exclaiming, " Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man : " but his fears were immediately dispelled, and he received the consolatory assurance that from henceforth he should become a fisher of men.

During the Saviour's abode at Capernaum, multitudes of people came from the neighbouring provinces of Phœnice and Syria, to be healed of their infirmities ; and, among the rest, a paralytic caused himself to be carried thither in his couch ; and because the house was surrounded with a concourse of invalids, he requested his friends to untile a part of the roof, and let him down by ropes. Jesus beheld the poor man's faith with pleasure,

and desired him to set his heart at rest, for that his sins were forgiven. This expression was immediately construed, by the discontented Jews, into blasphemy, and it began to be murmured through the assembly, "Who can forgive sins but God?" but our Blessed Master soon convinced them of their error, by empowering the paralytic to take up his couch, and to return home in perfect convalescence.

Shortly after this miracle, Jesus called a publican named Levi, or Matthew, from the receipt of custom, and accepted an invitation to the house of his new disciple. This circumstance gave great offence to the Pharisees, who exclaimed in all the pride of self righteousness, "Behold, he eateth with publicans and sinners!" but their clamour was effectually silenced upon our Lord's affirming, that he was come to call sinners, and not the righteous, to repentance.

Having effected a great reformation by his preaching, and rendered himself peculiarly dear to the poor by his compassionate miracles in this part of the country, Jesus returned to Jerusalem, in order to celebrate the approaching festival of the Passover. Here he gave great offence to the Jews, by healing a paralytic, and restoring a man's withered hand on the sabbath day : but he silenced their reproaches by unanswerable arguments, and proved to a demonstration, that works of mercy were rather the proper business than a violation of the sabbath. He also disculpated his disciples, who had been severely censured for plucking some ears of corn, and rubbing them between their hands, to appease their hunger, on the seventh day : but though the complaints of the Pharisees were annihilated, their malice became

more inveterate, and they actually resolved to take Jesus off by assassination. This design, however, was frustrated for the present, and the Saviour retired to the maritime parts of Judea, where he exercised his wonted goodness upon all objects of compassion.

One night, having withdrawn himself from the multitudes which usually attended his ministry, he went up into a mountain, and continued in fervent prayer till the morrow, when he called his followers together, and ordained twelve* from among the rest, to be immediate witnesses of his life and doctrine, and to spread abroad that glorious gospel, by which the fallen progeny of Adam might obtain forgiveness of their sins, and eternal happiness.

Meanwhile crowds of people flocked to him from all parts of Judea, and the adjacent provinces, being fully convinced that his surprising cures on the sick, insane, demoniacs, and other objects of pity, were wrought by the immediate power of God; and his discourses were so admirably calculated to enlighten the human mind, that he was always heard with amazement and attention.

Being addressed on behalf of a pious centurion, whose servant was dangerously ill of a palsy, the Messiah readily offered to go and heal him; but the Roman officer acknowledged his unworthiness of so great an

* These persons, whom our Saviour honoured with the name of Apostles, were Simon Peter; Andrew his brother; James and John, the sons of Zebedee; Philip and Bartholomew; Matthew the Evangelist; Thomas surnamed Didymus; James the son of Alphaeus; Simon Zelotes; Judas, or Jude, surnamed Lebbeus; and Judas the traitor, surnamed Iscariot.

honor, and observed that he depended entirely on the efficacious word of Jesus for the restoration of his servant's health. Hereupon the afflicted domestic was healed according to his master's desire ; and Jesus embraced that opportunity of assuring his auditors that many strangers should be admitted, by faith, into his kingdom, whilst multitudes of Abraham's descendants should be cast out for their unbelief and disobedience.

Having raised the son of a poor widow to life, at the city of Nain, and given some other testimonies of his divine origin, Jesus accepted an invitation to the house of a Pharisee named Simon, where he was accosted by a woman who had formerly led a dissolute life, but was now become a true penitent. This poor creature came behind her Saviour in the humblest manner, and prostrated herself at his feet, which she bathed with her flowing tears, wiped with her dishevelled hair, and anointed with a costly perfume. Simon, in the mean time, was shocked at the transaction, and began to suppose that if his guest were a prophet, or messenger of God, he would have spurned such a notorious sinner from his presence ; but, by a beautiful parable, Jesus convinced the proud Pharisee of his error, and dismissed his humble votary with an assurance that her numerous sins were freely pardoned.

Upon Christ's return to Capernaum, he cured a poor demoniac who had been long afflicted with deafness and deprivation of sight ; but whilst this miracle produced becoming emotions of gratitude and admiration in many of the bystanders, the Pharisees exclaimed that he was a vile impostor, who cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub. Jesus, however, fully exposed the absurdity

of this assertion, and reminded his accusers, that though every species of blasphemy against the Son of Man should, upon genuine repentance, be forgiven, yet that against the Holy Ghost should never obtain forgiveness, either in this world or at the day of judgment. The Pharisees, finding themselves baffled in their diabolical malice, demanded a more convincing sign of his divine mission ; but he refused to give them any other than that of the prophet Jonah, observing, that as Jonah was three days and nights in the fish's belly, so should the Son of Man be as many days in the bowels of the earth.

After instructing his followers in the glorious truths of his gospel, by several striking and elegant parables, he took ship, with a design to cross the sea of Galilee, and retired into the stern, where he fell asleep. A furious tempest immediately ensued, and the waves rose to such a dangerous height, that the disciples began to dread the wreck of their vessel, and unanimously exclaimed, " Master, save us, or we shall perish." Jesus, being awakened by their cries, rebuked them for their want of faith ; and commanded the sea and the wind to be still. The furious elements instantly obeyed their Creator's voice ; and the mariners expressed their astonishment at the authority of their illustrious passenger.

Jesus had scarcely landed in the country of the Gadarenes, before he was met by a demoniac, who was so extremely fierce that no chains could bind him, and who had hitherto resided among the tombs. This unhappy creature, having acknowledged that Jesus was the Son of God, and having besought him not to torment him, was asked his name, upon which he replied, my

name is Legion, for we are many, implying that a multitude of evil spirits had taken possession of his body. Hereupon the Saviour restored him to his health and senses, while the infernal spirits migrated into a herd of swine, and precipitated those animals, to the number of two thousand, into the sea.

The Gadarenes having besought Jesus to depart out of their coasts, he returned again to Capernaum, where he healed a poor woman of an hæmorrhage, and raised a young maiden to life. He then cured two poor blind men, and revisited his native city Nazareth, where he preached with such majestic grace and eloquence, as astonished the whole audience ; but they still reflected on the meanness of his birth and education ; and, by their invincible obstinacy, prevented his working any signal miracles in their presence.

On his departure from Nazareth, Jesus commanded his apostles to make a progress through all the cities of Galilee ; and, having endowed them with his own miraculous gifts, enjoined them to labour assiduously for the conversion of sinners ; to dispense his blessings with gratuitous liberality, and to depend upon Divine Providence for sustenance and reward. Whilst the disciples were thus employed, Jesus remained at Capernaum, where he received information of the Baptist's death, and Herod's restless jealousy, which induced him, upon the return of his missionaries, to retire to one of the deserts of Judea. Here he gave a convincing proof of his divinity, by multiplying five barley loaves and a few small fishes to such an amazing quantity as sufficed five thousand persons, besides women and children. The multitude being fully convinced, by this miracle, that he was the true Messiah, resolved to make him a king by force ; but he frus-

trated their intention by retiring to a neighbouring mountain, where he spent a considerable part of the night in prayer.

Meanwhile the disciples, having embarked in a vessel, at their Master's command, endeavoured to row across the lake to Bethsaida ; but a contrary wind prevented them from reaching the shore. About the fourth watch of the night, Jesus walked toward them on the waves, and by that action threw them into the greatest consternation, as they supposed him to have been a spectre. However, the Lord assured them that it was really himself, and permitted Peter to come to him upon the water : but that apostle had not proceeded far before his faith failed, and he began to sink ; whereupon Jesus upbraided him with want of holy confidence, and safely conducted him to the vessel. At his landing, he was met by a great concourse of people, who brought to him their diseased friends and relatives, and many persons who had been recently fed with the loaves and fishes, presented themselves again to his notice ; but these, being rebuked for their sordid motive, quitted the Divine Preacher in disgust.

Shortly after the celebration of the Passover, which was the third after Christ's entrance into his public ministry, the Pharisees sent some of their spies to entangle him in his conversation, or to collect some matter of accusation against him ; but he answered them with such prudence and dignity, that they were effectually silenced ; though their employers still preserved their malice, and resolved to ruin the object of their hatred on the first occasion.

Whilst the Scribes and Pharisees were consulting together against the Lord of Glory, he travelled toward

the coast of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house privately ; but the door was immediately thronged with sick persons and cripples, and he was again induced to manifest his divine compassion. Among the people who applied for aid upon this occasion, was a Syrophœnician woman, whose daughter was grievously tormented with an evil spirit. The disciples were so displeased at this poor woman's cries, that they requested their Master to send her away, and Jesus himself observed, that it was not proper to deprive the children of their meat and give it unto dogs : but, on her humbly reminding him that even dogs were permitted to eat the crumbs which fell from their master's table, he commended her faith, and pronounced the desired restoration of her daughter.

On his arrival at Decapolis, the Redeemer gave the faculties of speech and hearing to a man who had been deaf and dumb from the time of his birth ; and performed so many miraculous cures, that the astonished multitude exclaimed, " He hath done all things well, for he maketh both the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak !" Their admiration of his miracles and doctrines induced them to follow him into a desert place, where he instructed them in the precepts of his holy religion, and where, at the expiration of three days, he satisfied their hunger, by working a new miracle upon seven loaves and a few fishes. Upwards of four thousand persons were fed, by this instance of supreme power, and seven baskets were filled with the fragments that remained after their repast.

Having arrived in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, and given his disciples an intimation of his approaching sufferings and death, he conducted Peter,

James, and John, to an exceeding high mountain, and was there transfigured before them : for whilst he was engaged in prayer, his face was suddenly overspread with celestial brightness ; his garments became whiter than snow ; and Moses and Elias appeared to and conferred with him. The apostles were confounded at the glory which surrounded them ; and Peter exclaimed " Lord it is good for us to be here ! Let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and another for Elias." But, on a voice from heaven proclaiming " This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him," he prostrated himself on the ground with his fellow disciples, and remained in silent adoration till their master raised them up, and resumed his wonted appearance.

Jesus, having commanded his disciples to conceal this vision till he was risen from the dead, descended from the mountain, and healed a youth who was dreadfully tormented by an evil spirit. He then spoke to the twelve concerning his crucifixion ; and, on being asked to pay the customary tribute to the Romans, he desired Peter to cast his hook into the lake, and told him that he should find a piece of money in the mouth of the first fish he took, which might be given to the collectors.

Having rebuked his followers for their ambition, which had introduced some disputes, and having assured them that the only method to become great in his kingdom was to adopt the innocence and humility of an infant, the Redeemer appointed seventy other disciples to go to all the cities of Israel, preaching the doctrine of repentance, and confirming their mission by various signs and wonders ; whilst himself went up to Jerusalem, and expounded the Sacred Writings with such wis-

dom and energy, that the people could not forbear exclaiming "Whence hath this man so much knowledge?" To this question he replied by observing, that his doctrines were not of man but of God; and that those who were disposed to obey the Divine will should soon be convinced of the truth of these assertions. He also remarked, that though many objected to the meanness of his birth, he was in reality of heavenly descent; and he enforced his doctrines by such powerful proofs, that great numbers of the Jews acknowledged him as the true Messiah, and glorified God for the fulfilment of his gracious promises.

The Jewish magistrates, being exasperated at the success which attended this plain preaching, sent some of their officers to take him into custody; but these persons, instead of executing their commission, were filled with admiration, and affirmed that no man had ever spoken like him.

Finding themselves baffled in this attempt, they brought an adulteress to the Redeemer, and desired him to give judgment respecting her, that they might find an accusation against him, either for his severity, or too great indulgence. Jesus, who clearly perceived their design, stooped down and wrote with his finger upon the ground, as if he did not hear them; but being pressed to declare his mind, he desired that the accuser who was free from sin, should cast the first stone, and then resumed his former attitude. This unexpected decision had such an effect upon the hypocritical Pharisees, that they all withdrew, one after another, and left the woman with her Divine Judge, who dismissed her with this gentle reproof, "Go thy way and sin no more."

After several discourses with the Pharisees, which tended to establish the truth of his own doctrines, and to expose the fallacy of their self righteousness, Christ departed into Galilee, where he healed an old decrepid woman, who had not been able to raise herself up during the space of ten years ; and wrought many other miracles in confirmation of his blessed doctrines.

At the feast of dedication, instituted by Judas Maccabeus, our Lord went up to Jerusalem and cured a man that was born blind. The news of this transaction soon reached the sanhedrim, and a dissension arose among the members of that assembly, some of whom affirmed that the miracle was a breach of the sabbath, and others insisted that no such wonders could be wrought by a sinner. Hereupon the man's parents were examined respecting his blindness ; and the patient himself was desired to ascribe the glory of his cure to God alone, since the person who had wrought it was certainly an impostor. The young man, however, boldly refuted their assertion, and spoke with such becoming zeal in vindication of his Divine Benefactor, that, after a contemptuous rebuke, they caused him to be turned out of the assembly.

After suffering many persecutions from the incredulous Pharisees and Sadduces, Jesus went to a village called Bethany, in order to raise his friend Lazarus from the dead. Upon his arrival at this place, Martha, the sister of the deceased, complained with many tears, that if he had been there she should not have suffered such an afflictive loss : but Jesus comforted her with an assurance, that her brother should rise again ; and convinced her, by the subsequent display of his power, that

he was indeed "the resurrection and the life" for on his addressing himself to his Father in prayer, and commanding Lazarus to come forth, the corse which had been supposed putrescent, received new animation, and was immediately restored to the enjoyment of life and health.

This signal proof of Christ's divinity was quickly rumoured through every part of Judea, and overwhelmed the sanhedrim with consternation ; "For," said they, "if we permit him to work such miracles without molestation, all men will believe on him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our place and nation." After much consultation upon the subject, Caiaphas, the high priest, stood up, and spoke to this effect, "Ye seem to know nothing, nor consider that it is expedient one man should die to prevent the ruin of a nation : " little thinking that he was then prophesying respecting the redemption of mankind by the despised son of Mary ; but we are expressly told that God gave him the spirit of prophesy upon this occasion. His advice was readily embraced by the Jewish doctors, and after they had resolved to murder the guiltless object of their hatred, they agreed to put Lazarus to death also, lest the sight of him should increase the number of Christ's followers.

Jesus, knowing the result of this consultation, withdrew to the city of Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples till the approaching festival of the Passover. He then returned to Bethany, and partook of a repast with Simon, who is surnamed the Leper. Whilst they were at supper, a woman entered the house, and anointed the Saviour's head with a precious kind of ointment, which she had brought in an alabaster box, for that

purpose. Judas, who appears to have been the purse-bearer, was highly displeased at this instance of profuseness, and asked why the ointment was not rather sold and given to the poor : but Jesus severely rebuked the hypocritical censor, and affirmed that the woman's generosity in anticipating his burial rite should be spoken of with reverence by the preachers of his gospel in all parts of the world.

On the following day, Jesus repaired to Bethphage, upon Mount Olivet, and directed two of his disciples to go to a certain place, and bring from thence a she ass, and a young colt, that had never been backed. This order was immediately executed ; and the disciples, having set their master on the foal, accompanied him to Jerusalem, while the multitude that assembled to meet him strewed the road with their garments, and branches of palm, exclaiming, " Hosannah ; blessed is the Son of David, and blessed is the king of Israel, who cometh in the name of the Lord.*

The Pharisees were highly incensed at these acclamations, and earnestly desired the Redeemer to silence them : but, instead of complying with their impious request, he assured them that if his followers should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out, and proclaim the illustrious Author of so many divine miracles. However, on his approaching the city, he damped the joys of his disciples, by reminding them of the dreadful ruin which would shortly overwhelm their country ;

* Thus was the prophecy of Zechariah accomplished, " Rejoice, O daughter of Zion : Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold thy King cometh unto thee : he is just and having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon the foal of an ass." See Zechariah ix. and 9th verse.

and the contemplation of that awful event had such an effect upon his own tender heart, that he burst into a flood of tears, and exclaimed, in the language of sincere compassion, "Oh that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace ! but now they are hidden from thine eyes, and the time approaches when thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and enclose thee on every side ; massacre thy children within thy bosom ; and level thee with the ground, so that one stone shall not remain upon another ; because thou knowest not the time of thy visitation."

Having uttered this compassionate expostulation, Jesus repaired to the temple, and gave a fresh demonstration of his divine authority, by expelling all the traders from that holy place, and rebuking the Pharisees for having converted the house of his worship into a den of thieves. The incensed rulers haughtily demanded the reason of this conduct, but his answer overwhelmed them with confusion, and he exposed their malice, unbelief, and hypocrisy, by such severe parables and arguments, that they would certainly have apprehended him had they not been overawed by the concourse of his admiring auditors.

On hearing that a number of Greeks who had come to the festival, were desirous of seeing him, Jesus gratified their curiosity, and entertained them with an affecting discourse on his own approaching sufferings. He then requested his heavenly father to glorify his name, and was immediately answered by a voice from above, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." The people, though surprised at this phenomenon, entirely mistook the voice, some asserting that an angel

had spoken, and others that a clap of thunder had issued from the clouds : but Jesus assured them that it was the real voice of God, which came from heaven, not for his, but their sakes, to warn them to make a right use of the evidence he had afforded them, lest they should draw upon themselves a heavy condemnation.

After giving his disciples a memorable proof of his humility, and the absurdity of the opposite vice, by washing their feet, and enforcing the necessity of charitable offices, Jesus prepared to celebrate his last and most solemn passover. Accordingly he directed two of his apostles to a certain house in Jerusalem, and followed thither, with the rest of the twelve, toward the evening. Whilst they were at supper, he began to be exceedingly sorrowful, and told his beloved companions that one of them, pointing to Judas, should betray him ; that Peter, who had always appeared peculiarly zealous, should deny him three times before the crowing of the cock ; and that all the rest should abandon him that very night. At the conclusion of the mournful repast he took bread, and, having broken and blessed it, distributed it among the disciples, saying, " Take eat ; this is my body which is given for you : do this in remembrance of me." Then, having blessed the wine, he took the cup, and presented it to them with these memorable words : " Drink ye all of this ; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins." The ceremony was then closed with an appropriate hymn, and the Redeemer desired his disciples to follow him to the garden of Gethsemane.

On their arrival at this retired spot, Jesus commanded some of his followers to watch near the entrance of the

garden, whilst he conducted Peter, James, and John to a separate part, that they might see and bear witness to his agonies, as they had already witnessed his transfiguration. He then prostrated himself on the earth, and, in the bitterness of anguish mingled with the most submissive resignation, prayed, that if it were *possible*, the dreadful cup might pass from him. This prayer was repeated twice, and the vehemency of his struggle threw him into such a dreadful agony,* that great drops of blood are expressly said to have issued like sweat from his pores, and to have fallen to the ground. An angel, however, was sent to comfort him under this matchless trial ; and his love toward the fallen sons of Adam triumphed over every pain.

Meanwhile Judas, who had consented to betray his Master for thirty pieces of silver, approached with several armed followers, and came to offer the treacherous kiss which he had appointed for a signal ; and the disciples who had been overpowered with sleep, were affrighted at the sight of their Lord's danger. Three times the ruffian band was struck to the ground at the voice of Jesus ; and Peter, drawing his sword, struck off the ear of one of the high priest's servants ; but the wounded man was immediately healed, and the illustrious Object of search suffered himself to be bound and dragged before the sanhedrim, without any mark of anger or resentment, while ten of his disciples withdrew

* It may not be improper to remark upon this subject, that, though Jesus Christ was really the MIGHTY GOD, and the CO-EQUAL SON OF THE MOST HIGH ; yet, in his capacity of Mediator, he stood in the place of his fallen creatures, and consequently endured the very extremity of pain which could be felt by man, or inflicted by Divine Justice.

in the utmost consternation, and Peter followed to the high priest's palace, where he soon denied his suffering Lord, according to Christ's prediction.

Jesus having borne the utmost indignities, and received the sentence of condemnation from the members of the sanhedrim, was conducted to the tribunal of Pontius Pilate ; and accused of various practices which threatened to destroy the peace of Jerusalem, and to invalidate Cæsar's authority. Hereupon the governor entered into conversation with our Lord ; and, after some time, declined giving judgment, since he could find nothing criminal either in his conduct or pretensions : but the Jews repeated their charge with such vehemence, that Pilate ordered the prisoner to be sent to Herod the tetrarch of Galilee.

Herod was highly gratified by this circumstance, as he had long desired to see a proof of Christ's extraordinary power ; but, finding that the prisoner would neither gratify his impertinent curiosity, nor even answer his interrogations, he ordered his guards to carry him back to the procurator of Judea.

Pilate was still unwilling to condemn an innocent person, and reminded the Jewish rulers that it was customary to release a criminal on such festivals as that of the Passover ; but they strenuously insisted on the execution of Jesus, and demanded that a murderer, named Barabbas, should be set at liberty in preference to him. Hereupon Pilate delivered the suffering Redeemer into the hands of the Roman soldiers, who scourged him with merciless severity ; pierced his sacred temples with a crown of thorns ; and exposed him to public derision, by covering his wounded shoulders with a pur-

ple robe, and placing a reed in his hand as mock ensigns of royalty.

In this deplorable condition was the SON OF GOD brought forth into the streets of Jerusalem ; and Pilate probably designed to appeal to the humanity of the multitude when he exclaimed, “ Behold the man !” but that rebellious race cried out with increased vehemence for his crucifixion ; and even declared that his escape would be a perpetual reproach on Pilate’s loyalty. The governor, therefore, having washed his hands, and declared himself innocent of the blood of that just person, delivered him up to be crucified, whilst the self deluded Jews exclaimed, “ His blood be upon us and upon our children.”

During these transactions Judas, being stung with remorse for his treacherous conduct, went to the sanhedrim, and threw down the reward of his baseness before the members of that assembly, acknowledging himself the vilest of sinners, and exhibiting various marks of contrition ; but, as his sorrow and despair were alike disregarded, he went and hanged himself : and the Jewish doctors, thinking it unlawful to replace the thirty pieces of silver in the treasury, agreed to purchase a potter’s field with them, for the sepulture of strangers. Such was the accomplishment of Zechariah’s prophetic remark ; “ They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver ; and the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter a goodly price that I was valued at by them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.”

Jesus was now stripped of the purple robe, and led, with two melefactors, toward a mountain, which was called Calvary by the Romans, and Golgotha by the He-

brews. In his way to this doleful place, he addressed himself to some women, who had melted into tears at the sight of his distress, and desired them to refrain their sorrow on his account, since they would have abundant cause to weep for the sad catastrophe of their own nation and metropolis.

A. D. About the sixth hour of the day he arrived at

33. the place of execution, where he was stripped, and nailed to the accursed tree ; but neither the excruciating agonies of his body, the inconceivable distress of his righteous soul, nor the blasphemies of his triumphing enemies could induce him to leave the great work of atonement unfinished, or to call down vengeance upon the impious multitude : but on the contrary, he raised his eyes to heaven, and earnestly prayed that his Father would pardon a deed which was committed through ignorance. At the same time the two criminals, who had accompanied him from the city, were crucified, the one on his right hand and the other on his left, according to the saying of Isaiah, “ He was numbered with the transgressors.”

Whilst Jesus hung suspended on the cross, a voluntary sacrifice for the sin of his murderers, he observed his mother, accompanied by his beloved disciple John, and Mary Magdalen, weeping profusely at the sad spectacle of his sufferings. He therefore recommended the former to the care of his favourite, and earnestly entreated them to show to each other the endearing duties of mother and son. Meanwhile an horrific darkness overspread the face of the earth, and continued for the space of three hours : during which time many of the spectators were overwhelmed with amazement, and returned to the city with many expressions of grief,

while the rest remained in a kind of stupid silence, expecting the event.

At the ninth hour, (the time of offering up the evening lamb) Jesus cried, in the extremity of anguish, "Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani," "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me !" and soon after expired, with these memorable words, "It is finished !" At this moment the universal frame of nature seemed to fall into convulsions ; the earth quaked, the rocks clave asunder, the graves burst open, the dead arose, and the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom, in token of the accomplishment of all the Mosaic types, and the completion of man's redemption.

The Jews, having satiated themselves with vengeance, requested of Pilate that the legs of the sufferers might be broken, and their bodies taken away, that the solemnity of their Passover might not be sullied. An order was immediately granted for this purpose ; and the lives of the two malefactors were terminated by the additional pangs of breaking their legs ; but as Jesus was already dead, they contented themselves with piercing his side, which immediately discharged a mixture of blood and water. These last circumstances, however, seem to have been under the immediate direction of Divine Providence, as they verified two ancient prophecies* respecting the Messiah ; one of which implied that "a bone of his should not be broken ;" and

* Some other prophecies were also fulfilled at the time of our Saviour's crucifixion, particularly those of king David ; "They pierced my hands and my feet : " and again, "They parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

the other, that "the inhabitants of Jerusalem should look on him whom they had pierced."

Joseph of Arimathea, having begged permission to bury the Saviour's body, carried it to his own garden, and deposited it in a new tomb, whilst the Pharisees obtained a body of guards to watch the door of the sepulchre, and to prevent the disciples from carrying off their deceased master.

On the third day some pious women, who had prepared a costly mixture of spices to embalm the Redeemer's body, arose at earliest dawn, and went to the place of his interment; but reasoned among themselves respecting the removal of the ponderous stone which lay at the entrance of the tomb. That obstacle, however, was already removed by a partial earthquake, and the guards had fled* to their employers with the astonishing news of Christ's resurrection; so that the women found the stone rolled away, and an angel, clothed in shining garments, sitting upon it. Whilst they gazed upon each other in silent astonishment, the celestial messenger addressed them in words to the following effect; "Why seek ye the living among the dead, after your Lord has so frequently assured you that he should rise again on the third day? Behold the place where his body was laid, and hasten to acquaint his disciples with the news of his resurrection."

The women ran with all possible speed, to execute this pleasing commission, but their information was, for

* The Pharisees were no sooner apprized of this circumstance, than they bribed the soldiers to suppress the truth, and to spread abroad a report that the body had been stolen during the night by Christ's disciples.

some time, regarded as the mere effect of a deluded imagination. At length, however, Peter and John had the curiosity to run to the sepulchre, where they found the burial dress folded together, and consequently began to entertain some hopes. Whilst they were conversing with their brethren on this important subject, Mary Magdalen came and assured them that the Lord had really appeared to, and conversed with her in the garden : but the majority of them still remained sceptical, till Jesus himself appeared in the midst of their little assembly, and renewed his promise of going before them into Galilee.

The same evening two of the disciples were overtaken by Jesus on the road to Emmaus, and instructed by him in several scriptural points ; but they do not seem to have had any idea of his person till they arrived at their journey's end, when he blessed their repast, according to his former practice, and vanished out of their sight. Upon this discovery they called to mind the extraordinary emotions that had been produced in their bosoms by their Master's conversation on the road, and went immediately to communicate their joy to the residue of their brethren at Jerusalem.

Notwithstanding these repeated and concurring testimonies, the apostles seem to have imagined that they had only seen a spirit or phantom in the form of their crucified Lord, and they were, probably, confirmed in this conjecture when, being at supper, with the doors fastened, for fear of the Jews, Christ surprised them with his presence, and gave them his accustomed benediction. However, he convinced them of their mistake, by showing them his pierced hands and feet ; explained several of the ancient prophecies to their entire satis-

faction ; and left them to meditate on the glorious occurrences of the day.

Thomas, surnamed Didymus, happened to be absent on this occasion, so that he still remained incredulous, and plainly declared that he should never be convinced of Christ's resurrection, unless he were permitted to thrust his fingers into the prints of the nails, and his hand into the wound which had been opened by the centurion's spear. At the expiration of eight days, however, he was overwhelmed with confusion at the sight of Jesus, and instead of taking the full demonstration which he had before insisted on, he prostrated himself at his feet, and acknowledged him as his Lord and his God. Hereupon he was dismissed with this mild reproof, "Thou believest Thomas, because thou hast seen ; but blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe."

Shortly after this blessed manifestation, the eleven disciples quitted Jerusalem according to the divine appointment, and went to Galilee, where their Master indulged them again with his presence, and renewed his former commission to preach and confirm his gospel, in these words, "All power is given to me both in heaven and earth. Go, therefore, and preach to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost."

Upon another occasion he revealed himself to seven of the disciples, and having wrought a beneficial miracle for their subsistence, condescended to eat and drink with them. He also gave Peter an especial charge to feed the flock of God, and predicted the martyrdom which should terminate the labours of that apostle.

Having thus manifested himself to his beloved disciples for the space of forty days, during which time he conversed familiarly on subjects of eternal importance, and comforted them with the assurance of his continual blessing, the Redeemer gathered all his church together as is supposed to the number of *five hundred, and led them to a mountain where he gave them a solemn benediction, and promised to confirm their testimony respecting him by various miraculous signs and wonders.

Having given these irrefragable proofs of his resurrection, and commanded his disciples to wait at Jerusalem till they received the promised Comforter, Jesus led the objects of his especial favour to the Mount of Olives, whence he ascended, in a bright cloud, to those regions of pure delight, which had been governed by his sceptre before the foundation of the world; and which now resounded with the new song † of "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, honor, glory, and blessing."

* See 1 Corinthians, xv. chap. 6 verse.

† Revelations, chap. v. 12th verse.

CHAPTER XII.

*From the Ascension of our Saviour to the Death of
St. Paul.*

A. D. 33. **T**HE disciples, having received an assurance from a celestial spirit, that the same Jesus who had now ascended into heaven, should in like manner come down again from thence, returned to Jerusalem ; and devoted their time to fasting, prayer, and such other acts of piety as were most likely to qualify them for the reception of the Holy Ghost. After some time, it was proposed to choose a new member into the apostolic college, in order to fill up the vacancy which had been made by Judas ; and Matthias, one of the seventy disciples, was chosen by lot, upon this occasion.

On the morning which ushered in the great feast of Pentecost, a mighty sound was suddenly heard from heaven ; a rushing wind seemed to fill the room * where the disciples were assembled, and cloven tongues of fire set upon each of their heads. Being now filled with the Holy Ghost, and inspired with the knowledge of foreign tongues, they immediately began to declare the wonderful works of God to a concourse of people, both Jews and proselytes, who ran together at the report of this great event ; and Peter delivered such an ani-

* The disciples of Christ, who were at this time about a hundred and twenty in number, were assembled in a large upper room, in the city of Jerusalem.

minated discourse upon the occasion, that three thousand of his auditors were happily convinced of the truth of his assertions, and publicly acknowledged their faith in the crucified Redeemer.

At the hour of evening prayer, Peter and John repaired to the temple and healed a poor cripple who sat at the gate to solicit alms. This miracle, being performed in such a public manner, excited general attention ; and, whilst the man who had received the cure was leaping and praising God, a concourse of people assembled about the apostles in Solomon's porch. Peter resolved to embrace so favourable an opportunity of bearing witness to the Divinity of his glorified Master ; and his sermon was attended with such signal success, that five thousand persons were immediately converted to the faith of Christ ; and those who had previously received the glad tidings of the gospel were so firmly established in the fundamental truths of their new religion, that they began to lay aside their dread of persecution, and devoted the greatest part of their time to works of charity and exemplary piety.

The members of the sanhedrim were no sooner apprized of these proceedings, than they sent officers to apprehend the apostles, and put them in prison : but upon Peter's boldly asserting the resurrection of Jesus, and demonstrating, from the scriptures, that he was the chief corner stone, which had been, long since, foretold to be rejected by the builders, they contented themselves for the present, with forbidding them to resume their ministerial employment.

Peter, having assured the members of the sanhedrim, that he should obey the commands of God rather than those of man, returned to the other dis-

ciples, and acquainted them with what had passed. Hereupon they unanimously prayed, that the Deity would confirm their faith, courage, and miraculous gifts, for the furtherance of his gospel : and their apartment was immediately shaken in so miraculous a manner, that they were thoroughly convinced of the presence of their Redeemer, and consequently resolved to persevere in their undertaking, notwithstanding all the opposition and discouragements which they might receive from Jews and Gentiles.

The Jewish rulers were highly exasperated at the violation of their command, and ordered the apostles to be again thrown into confinement ; but, during the night, they were liberated by an angel, and sent back to preach the great atonement of the Messiah. When, therefore, the council assembled to determine on the fate of their prisoners, they received the astonishing news of their escape, and were, soon after, informed that they were haranguing the populace in the temple. Hereupon the captain and other officers of the temple were desired to seize the preachers, and bring them before the sanhedrim : but Peter and his colleagues answered to their accusation with such extraordinary boldness, and adduced such irrefragable reasons in support of their conduct, that Gamaliel, a Pharisee of exemplary piety and great reputation, overruled the intentions of the other judges, and persuaded them to moderate their resentment, lest they should eventually be found to fight against God. The apostles were therefore dismissed, after a slight chastisement, and their brethren rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the cause of their divine Master.

Shortly after this occurrence, the apostles ordained seven persons, from among the number of believers, to act as deacons in the church, and to take especial care for the relief of necessitous brethren, which had hitherto interfered with the more important work of the ministry.

One of these deacons was Stephen, a man of extraordinary zeal and piety, who wrought such great wonders in the name of Christ, as excited the malice of the Jews, and finally induced them to accuse him of blasphemy against God and his servant Moses. Being brought before the sanhedrim, and permitted to speak in his own defence, he reminded his judges of the transactions of their progenitors ; demonstrated, by incontrovertible proofs, that the Mosaic rites were to be abolished in order to make room for a more spiritual religion ; upbraided them with violating the law, despising the prophets, and murdering the true Messiah ; and finally asserted that he saw the heavens opened, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. This speech was immediately construed into blasphemy, and the prisoner, being sentenced to death, was stoned without the gates of the city.

A. D. The murder of this amiable man was followed
34. by a violent persecution against the Christians ; yet Divine Providence converted this very circumstance into a mean of propagating the gospel ; and whilst the saints at Jerusalem groaned beneath the tyrannous cruelty of their enemies, their brethren migrated into the adjacent countries, and offered the invaluable gift of God to the Gentiles.

During this persecution, Philip, the deacon, went to Samaria, and gave such convincing proofs of his divine

mission, that many of the inhabitants received his word with unspeakable joy, and among the rest, one Simon, a sorcerer, received the rite of baptism ; but on the arrival of Peter and John, who went thither to impart the * Holy Ghost to the new disciples, he offered a large sum of money for a similar power, and thus betrayed his falsehood and hypocrisy. For this proposal Peter rebuked him with great severity, and affirmed that he had neither part nor lot in the blessings of the Christian church, since his heart was not right in the sight of God.

The apostles, having performed their important task in Samaria and the neighbouring villages, returned to Jerusalem ; while Philip was led by an angel to one of the deserts between Jerusalem and Gaza. Here he met with a great officer belonging to the queen of Ethiopia, and converted him to the truth of the gospel, by expounding the fifty third chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah. The pious deacon was then caught away by the spirit, to Azotus, whence he travelled to Cæsarea, and proclaimed to all the towns upon the road the glad tidings of salvation.

Meanwhile Saul, a zealous Pharisee of the tribe of Benjamin, used his utmost endeavours to exterminate the disciples of Christ, and even desired authority from the high priest, to apprehend and imprison all persons of the new persuasion, whom he might find at Damascus. But previously to his arrival at that city, he was

* It is evident from this passage, that Philip, who preached to the Samaritans, was not the apostle of that name, but only the deacon ; for had he been an apostle, Peter and John need not have taken a journey to lay hands upon the converts whom he had already baptized.

struck to the earth by a sudden blaze of celestial light, and a voice from heaven exclaimed, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me." He was also smitten with blindness ; and remained for the space of three days in unutterable agonies of mind ; but at length one Ananias was commanded to restore him to his sight, and to inform him that God had chosen him to publish the gospel of his Son to various parts of the world. The furious persecutor being thus suddenly converted to the true faith, remained a few days with the disciples at Damascus, and, soon after, preached the resurrection of Christ in the synagogues, to the amazement of all who heard him.

The Pharisees were utterly confounded at this unexpected change in the faith and manners of Saul, and, after some fruitless disputations, resolved to take him off by assassination ; but their base design was discovered, and the object of their unjust resentment was happily delivered by the assistance of his fellow disciples.

Having eluded the vigilance of his implacable enemies, the new convert repaired to Jerusalem, and attempted to join himself to the Christians in that city ; but the recollection of his fierce and sanguinary persecutions had made so deep an impression upon their minds, that they doubted the reality of his faith, and even trembled for the fate of their little assembly. At length, however, Barnabas* dispelled their fears, by

* This person, whose name was Joses, was a Levite of Cyprus, and appears to have been extremely useful in the work of the ministry ; for, in consequence of his preaching and other religious duties, the apostle surnamed him Barnabas, or the Son of Consolation.

relating the circumstances of his conversion, and assuring them that he had preached the word of God, with equal zeal and sincerity at Damascus. This testimony was fully corroborated by Saul himself, who asserted the divinity of his Lord, in the boldest manner, at Jerusalem : but as the Grecian or Hellenistic Jews, who had been confounded by his arguments, began to threaten him with death, the disciples prevailed on him to retire for the present to his native city Tarsus, in Cilicia.

During these transactions Peter cured Eneas of a palsy, at Lydda ; raised Dorcas from the dead, at Joppa ; and wrought so many miracles in the name of his Adorable Master, that great numbers of people embraced the doctrines of Christ. This apostle was also called by Divine Providence to Cæsarea, where he explained the way of salvation to a pious centurion, named * Cornelius, and expatiated so forcibly on the resurrection of the Messiah, and the necessity of repentance, that all his auditors immediately turned to God, and were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

The Jewish believers, hearing of this circumstance, reproved Peter for having visited and partaken of a repast with a family of heathens, in violation of the Mosaic law. But upon his informing them that his private scruples had been removed by a voice from heaven, and his conduct had received an abundant blessing, they laid aside their anger, and glorified God who had graciously extended his blessings to the Gentiles.

* Cornelius had been admonished, by an angel, to send for Peter, that he might receive such instructions from that apostle as should conduce to his eternal happiness.

The persecutions against the church, which had subsided from the time of Saul's conversion, were now renewed by Herod (or Agrippa,) who appears to have been a zealous observer of the Jewish religion, and who consequently regarded the doctrines of Christianity as a dangerous heresy. The first victim of his intemperate zeal was James the Less, surnamed Boanerges, whom he caused to be decapitated ; and Peter was, immediately after, thrown into prison. But though the greatest precautions were taken for securing that apostle, both with fetters and guards, the prayers of the Christians were heard on his behalf, and the very night before his designed execution he was liberated by an angel, from the place of his confinement, and enabled to shelter himself from the search of his royal enemy.

A. D. 44. Herod, having punished the supposed negligence of the gaolers with death, went down to Cæsarea, in order to celebrate some public games, in honor of Claudius Cæsar ; and to give an audience to some Tyrian and Sidonian ambassadors, who, having been some time in disgrace, came to deprecate his anger, and to implore the continuance of his friendship to their respective nations. Accordingly, on an appointed day he appeared in his royal robes, and addressed himself to the deputies in such an elegant speech, that those sycophants exclaimed, "It is the voice of a god and not of a man !" but whilst the air resounded with their impious acclamations, Herod was smitten with a dreadful disease, which both demonstrated the baseness of his flatterers, and terminated his mortal existence.

Saul and Barnabas, being ordained for the express purpose of preaching to the Gentiles, went from * Antioch to Cyprus, where they converted the governor to the faith of Christ, and smote a sorcerer, called Elymas, with blindness, for presuming to obstruct them in the discharge of their sacred duties. They then proceeded to Pamphylia, and afterward to Antioch, in Pisidia, where Saul (who from this time is called Paul, by the sacred historian) delivered some animated discourses on the death, resurrection and divinity of Jesus Christ ; but the Jews contradicted his assertions, and even blasphemed the sacred name of his Redeemer, in consequence of which he declared his intention of turning to the Gentiles according to the command of the Lord.

The Gentiles seem to have been truly grateful for this declaration ; and many of them believed to the salvation of their souls : but the apostles were subjected to many inconveniences by the discontented Jews, and were eventually compelled to quit the country. .

In consequence of this persecution, they went to Iconium and preached, with great success, to a multitude of Jews and Greeks, who heard them with attention, and were amazed at the miracles which they wrought in the all prevailing name of Christ. After some time, however, an unhappy misunderstanding took place among the citizens, and the apostles were obliged to depart, with precipitation, to the region of Lycaonia.

* Barnabas is said to have brought Saul from Tarsus to Antioch ; and there the disciples of our Redeemer first received the appellation of Christians.

On their arrival at Lystra, Paul wrought a miraculous cure upon a poor cripple ; and by that means excited the admiration of all the people ; insomuch, that they affirmed two of their gods, Jupiter and Mercury, were come down from heaven ; and it was with great difficulty that the apostles restrained them from offering sacrifices, under that mistake. At the instigation of certain malicious Jews, however, the fickle multitude caused Paul to be stoned, and left him for dead.

When the riotous assembly was dispersed, Paul rose up, and went with Barnabas to confirm the disciples in several cities that had recently received the gospel. They then returned to Antioch in Syria, where they acquainted the brethren with all the particulars of their excursion ; and from whence they were sent to Jerusalem, in order to decide a controversy which had been raised among the believers, respecting the necessity of obedience to the ritual law of Moses.

Having fully discussed this business, in the presence of Peter, James, and the other apostles, they sent a message to Antioch, and some other countries, importing that Gentile converts were not bound to fulfil the Jewish ritual ; but merely to abstain from fornication, from meats offered to idols, from things strangled, and from blood. Paul and Barnabas then resolved to visit their brethren in every city where they had planted or nourished the truth of Christianity ; but, a contention arising respecting the person whom they should take for their assistant, they separated and took two several routes : Barnabas sailing with his favourite Mark, for Cyprus ; and Paul, accompanied by Silas, making the tour of Syria and Cilicia.

At Lystra, Paul became acquainted with a young disciple named Timothy, whom he took for a companion in the ministry ; and they appear to have travelled through several parts of Asia Minor, confirming the churches, and proclaiming the complete redemption of mankind by Jesus Christ.

Being invited by a nocturnal vision, to Macedonia, they preached at Philippi, with some success, and cast an evil spirit out of a young woman who had formerly enriched her masters by predicting future events. Hereupon the employers of the damsel caused the apostles to be seized and dragged before the magistrates, who immediately ordered them to be scourged, and imprisoned. Before the expiration of the night, however, the prison doors were burst open by a tremendous earthquake ; the bands of the prisoners were loosened ; and the gaoler, being convinced of the real cause of this occurrence, was baptized, with all his family, into the faith of our Redeemer.

The apostles being dismissed by the affrighted magistrates, proceeded to Thessalonica, where several persons were converted through their instrumentality ; but the unbelieving Jews soon rose up against them, and excited a tumult, which would probably have produced some fatal consequences, if they had not immediately resumed their journey. However, they were greatly comforted at Berea, by perceiving that the Jewish inhabitants of that place heard them with attention, and searched the scriptures diligently for a confirmation of the new doctrines which were submitted to their consideration. By this prudent and generous practice, many individuals were induced to believe in the despised Son of Mary ; and much good was wrought

by the hands of the inspired preachers, till a deputation of Jews from Thessalonica disturbed the tranquility of the city.

Upon Paul's arrival at Athens, he disputed with the Jews in their synagogues, and with the heathen philosophers in the market place ; and, on Mar's hill, he delivered an elegant and convincing discourse on the existence and nature of that God, whom he found to be ignorantly worshipped under the appellation of " The Unknown." Nor did he merely insist upon the nature and necessity of that exalted worship which elevated the human mind to heavenly objects, and spurned at the fopperies of idolatry ; but he gradually introduced the glorious doctrines of Christianity ; and boldly declared that Jesus Christ, whom God had raised from the dead, should eventually judge the world in righteousness.

Having thus performed his ministerial task at Athens, he removed to Corinth, where he continued, by the command of his Redeemer, eighteen months, and preached in the Jewish synagogue every sabbath day. His labours in this place were abundantly blessed to the Gentiles, and some Jews also were added to the church : but it appears that his joys were considerably damped by the evil practices of some false brethren, and pretenders to apostleship. Some obdurate Jews, also, made an insurrection upon his account, and dragged him before the tribunal of Gallio, but that governor refused to pass judgment upon him, and he, consequently, eluded the fury of his enemies.

On his arrival at Ephesus, he preached to several persons who had been baptized only unto John's baptism, and, by the imposition of his hands, they received the Holy Ghost. He then proclaimed the

glad tidings of the gospel to as many as chose to attend his discourses, and wrought many miraculous cures in the name of his Adorable Master ; but, at the expiration of two years, a silversmith, who made shrines for the goddess Diana, excited a general tumult against the apostle, which was with difficulty appeased by the town clerk.

When the fury of the idolatrous rioters had subsided, Paul took leave of his christian brethren, and after some time, sailed to Troas, where he devoted seven days to the instruction of the people, and raised a young man to life, who had been killed by a fall from the window of an upper apartment.

Having assembled the elders of the Ephesian church at Miletus, and given them an especial charge to watch over the conduct and situation of the saints, he went to Cæsarea, and took up his temporary residence at the house of Philip the deacon. During his stay at this place, a certain prophet, named Agabus, predicted that he should be bound at Jerusalem, and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles : but Paul persisted in his resolution of visiting that metropolis, and boldly declared that he was ready, not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.

Pursuant to this determination, he hastened by many fatiguing journies and voyages to Jerusalem, and informed the Christian elders in that city, of all the wonders which God had wrought, by his hands, among the idolatrous Gentiles. He then purified himself after the manner of persons who had the vow of a Nazarite upon them, that he might not incur the charge of violating the Mosaic law : but the unbelieving Jews had such an inveterate antipathy against him, that they

seized him, under the false pretence of his having introduced Greeks into the temple ; and their fury rose to such an ungovernable height, that the apostle would certainly have lost his life, had it not been for the captain of the temple, who rescued him with an armed force, and gave him permission to address the multitude.

Paul, being thus called upon for his defence, made an elegant oration to his countrymen, in which he recapitulated the principal transactions of his life, and gave an animated description of his conversion : but when he affirmed that Christ had appeared to him in the temple, and commanded him to offer salvation to the Gentiles, his auditors exclaimed with one accord, " Away with such a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he should live." Hereupon the chief captain conducted him to the castle, and ordered the chief priests and other members of the council to appear, on the morrow, that the prisoner might have a better opportunity of pleading his cause before them.

Next morning Paul was brought before the Jewish tribunal ; but, as one part of his judges were Pharisees and the other Sadducees, he prudently affirmed that he was called in question for the hope of the resurrection, and by that means eluded condemnation for the present. Upon his return to prison he was greatly encouraged by a vision of his Divine Master ; and, the cruel design of some Jews against his life, being frustrated by the Providence of God, he was sent, under a strong guard, to Cæsarea.

The Jewish elders finding themselves disappointed of immediate revenge, followed the apostle to Cæsarea, and renewed their accusations before Felix, the gov-

ernor of Judea. Paul's defence, however, was so energetic and convincing, that Felix refused to condemn him ; and only kept him as a prisoner, in expectation of receiving a liberal *douceur* for his liberation.

At the expiration of two years, Festus succeeded to the government of Judea, and the inveterate Jews again preferred their complaints against the object of their resentment ; but Paul utterly denied their charge, and effectually baffled their nefarious design by appealing to Cæsar. Soon after this transaction he was desired to give an account of himself to king Agrippa ; and his speech, upon that occasion, was fraught with such irresistible arguments, that his royal judge exclaimed, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Having thus vindicated his doctrines and conduct upon several occasions, Paul was, at length, sent to Rome with several other prisoners, and a suitable guard. Their voyage was rendered extremely dangerous by storms and dark weather, as the apostle had predicted, and they were finally shipwrecked near the island of Melita.* They all escaped, however, safe to land, and the barbarous inhabitants of the island entertained them with great hospitality. Here Paul, having excited the attention of the people, by shaking a viper from his hand without receiving any injury, wrought several miraculous cures, and laboured assiduously in the work of the ministry for the space of three months, at the expiration of which time he resumed his voyage to Italy, and soon afterward arrived at Rome.

Having, at length, reached the imperial city, and obtained permission to reside, with a Roman soldier, in

* Now Malta.

his own hired house, he sent for the chief of the Jews, and made a suitable apology for his having appealed to the emperor. He then began to preach the gospel to all, both Jews and Romans, who would give him audience ; and he occasionally comforted the churches of God by various instructive letters or epistles.

After he had resided a considerable time at Rome, he was permitted to visit several of the Christian churches, both in Europe and Asia ; but on his return he was thrown into close confinement, and all men forsook him. He therefore wrote to inform his beloved Timothy that the time of his departure was at hand ; and, after he had laboured and suffered more than any of the apostles, he was decapitated, by command of Nero, whose infamous cruelties have rendered his name and memory obnoxious to mankind.

Of the other apostles of our Blessed Redeemer, it is only requisite to observe, that Peter was crucified according to his Master's prediction ; James the Greater, was assassinated at Jerusalem ; John was banished to the isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelations, and most of the others terminated their successful labours by a glorious martyrdom.

CHAPTER XIII.

Continuation of the Jewish History, from the death of St. Paul to the final Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans.

WHILST the church of Christ acquired strength and credit by the miraculous works of its apostles, and the pious deportment of its members, that of the Jews was distracted by commotions, and exhibited several convincing symptoms of its approaching downfall. The Jewish state was also involved in perpetual troubles, under a succession of tyrannical governors; and the decision of a contest, which had been long carried on between the Jews and Syrians, respecting the city of Cæsarea, was the signal for a general insurrection in Judea.

A. D. 69. Agrippa, who happened to be at Jerusalem at this critical juncture, made an elaborate speech to the insurgents in hope of appeasing their fury: but his intreaties and remonstrances were alike disregarded, and he was soon compelled to provide for his own safety by flight. Nothing was now to be seen but acts of cruelty and desperation; nothing to be heard but the agonizing shrieks of sufferers, and the rude shouts of sanguinary rebels. Twenty thousand Jews were inhumanly murdered by the Cæsareans; fifty two thousand were massacred in Egypt; and three thousand

five hundred were cut off in one day, at Jerusalem, by command of the Roman prætor ; whilst the Jews, on their part, exercised the most wanton cruelties on all the Syrians and Romans who had the misfortune to fall into their hands.

After the rebels had, with the assistance of a numerous banditti, taken several important fortresses, reduced the palaces of Agrippa and the high priest to ashes, and defeated Cestius Gallus with the loss of four thousand of his infantry, and four hundred of his cavalry, Nero commanded Vespasian, an officer of extraordinary prudence and bravery, to march with all possible expedition into Palestine : but whilst that commander was employed in raising forces, and his son, Titus, was sent to fetch two of the Roman legions from Alexandria, the Jews made formidable preparations for carrying on the war, and appointed persons of approved conduct and resolution to command their troops in the various cantons and fortresses of Judea.

Early in the ensuing spring, however, the imperial army, which consisted of sixty thousand men, entered Galilee with fire and sword, and laid close siege to Jotapa. Josephus, governor of the province, being apprized of their design, supplied the city with an abundance of stores, and defended it with unparalleled bravery for the space of forty seven days ; but the Roman arms were, at length, victorious, and all the inhabitants were either sacrificed to the rage of the conquerors or made prisoners. Josephus, perceiving that all resistance was vain, hid himself in a deep cavern, with forty of his men : but his retreat was discovered to Vespasian, and that famous general sent to offer him

life upon honourable conditions. However, on his proposing to accept of this offer, his companions upbraided him in the severest manner, and threatened to murder both him and themselves unless he consented to draw lots who should kill his companion, and by that means prevent the crime of suicide. This dreadful proposal was accepted through necessity, and Providence so ordered it that the two last survivors were Josephus and a person whom he easily persuaded to surrender. On his arrival in the Roman camp, the Jewish commander assured Vespasian that he should soon enjoy the empire ; and, in consequence of this prediction, the conqueror treated him with great respect and generosity.

After the reduction of Japha, Joppa and some other important towns in Galilee, the Roman forces invested Gamala, and soon got possession of the place ; but the garrison and inhabitants fought with such uncommon desperation, that the besiegers were driven back with prodigious slaughter : at length, however, a part of the wall was battered down, and the exasperated assailants took an ample revenge. During these transactions, Placidus obtained a decisive victory over some Jews, who had retired to the mountain Itabys ; and Titus, having took possession of Gischala, completed the conquest of Galilee.

Whilst the more rational part of the Jewish nation perceived the impending destruction of their country, and urged the necessity of immediate submission, the opposite party, headed by the most abandoned wretches that ever disgraced human nature, opposed all pacific measures, and filled the metropolis with blood and la-

mentation ; whilst famines, earthquakes, and terrific prodigies, conspired to fulfil the awful predictions of Christ and his holy apostles. Twelve thousand persons of noble extraction were inhumanly slaughtered by a party of incendiaries, who veiled the most horrid crimes under an affected zeal for religion, and the sanguinary tyrants assumed a sovereign power from which the unhappy sufferers had no appeal.

After plundering and murdering all their principal opponents, the zealots began to turn their arms against each other, and the rival names of John and Simon were heard with consternation in all parts of the country : whilst the ill fated capital was literally filled with carnage, misery, and dilapidations.

A. D. Meanwhile, Vespasian, hearing of Nero's
71. death and Galba's accession, sent his son, Titus, to receive further orders respecting the war, and at the same time reduced all the Idumean towns to ashes, excepting such as were deemed serviceable for the troops whom he appointed to overawe the country. Shortly after these transactions Vespasian was elected emperor, according to the prediction of Josephus ; and Titus was empowered to terminate the war by the utter destruction of Jerusalem.

Notwithstanding their sad condition, and the rapid approaches of a powerful enemy to the very gates of their capital, the Jews still persevered in their obstinacy, and madly augmented the number of their intestine calamities. Eleazer, a person of known courage, formed a new faction against John of Gischala, and actually converted the court of the priests into a scene of bar-

barous hostility, whilst Simon kept possession of the city, and rendered himself equally insupportable by his tyrannical conduct.

Such was the melancholy situation of Jerusalem when Titus sat down before it with his victorious army, and began his hostile operations. The near approach of this enemy produced a temporary reconciliation between the contending factions ; and a sally was made with such irresistible fury that the besiegers were actually driven from their camp : but they soon turned upon their pursuers, and took an ample revenge for this temporary disgrace.

Titus, having repeatedly exhorted the Jews to throw down their arms, and accept of his clemency, ordered his troops to play their engines against the *outward wall ; and a breach was soon made which compelled the rebels to retire within their second enclosure. The besiegers then renewed their exertions with surprising fury, and the demolition of one of the towers afforded them a more important entrance.

Notwithstanding these advantages, Titus was still anxious to preserve the city from destruction, and still continued to hold out the olive of peace to the inhabitants ; but as all his offers were rejected with insolent disdain, he caused the place to be surrounded by a strong wall, that the garrison might neither receive any succours from the adjacent country, nor delude themselves with the hope of a safe retreat.

Jerusalem was at this time afflicted by the united scourges of famine, pestilence, and civil war, and

* Jerusalem was fortified with three walls and several strong towers.

every street exhibited a horrid spectacle of emaciated invalids and putrefying bodies ; whilst the zealots exercised every species of wanton barbarity upon their fellow citizens, and forced open every house in quest of provisions. At this juncture, also, a number of vile pretenders were hired to prophesy an approaching deliverance, and by this means, the despairing remnant of the people were dissuaded from going out to the besiegers.

Titus, being apprized of these circumstances, and hearing that an unfortunate mother had been reduced to the sad extremity of killing and eating her own infant, swore to bury the Jewish metropolis under its own ruins ; and solemnly appealed to heaven for the rectitude of his own conduct, which had, certainly, received the most ungrateful return from the objects of his present resentment.

Pursuant to this resolution, he ordered his forces to endeavour to possess themselves of Fort Antonio ; and this command was executed with complete success ; but though nothing was now opposed to the enemy except the temple, and though formidable preparations were making for the reduction of that edifice, the Jews still permitted themselves to be deluded with vain hopes of a miraculous deliverance.

On the seventeenth day of July, the diurnal sacrifice was interrupted, for the first time since its restoration by Judas Maccabeus ; and on the twenty eighth of the same month Titus took possession of the outer court of the temple. He then caused the gates of that famous structure to be set on fire ; and the flame soon communicated to the adjacent galleries and porticos ; but

as he was still extremely anxious for the preservation of the sanctuary, he caused the fire to be extinguished, and appeased the clamors of his troops who had loudly insisted on the necessity of rasing it to the ground.

The prediction of Christ, however, was hastening to its accomplishment, and the boast of Judea was soon involved in the threatened calamity : for, whilst Titus was reposing in his tent, a Roman soldier threw a lighted torch into one of the private apartments adjoining to the most holy place. The whole north side was immediately enveloped in flames, and the Roman troops began to carry off all the costly vestments and utensils, whilst Titus, who had been awakened by the noise, contemplated the sanctuary with inexpressible admiration, and lamented his inability to stop the spreading conflagration.

A horrid massacre now ensued, in which prodigious multitudes of the inhabitants perished, whilst others rushed, in a kind of frenzy, into the midst of the flames, or precipitated themselves from the battlements of their falling temple. Six thousand persons who had been deluded thither by a false prophet were involved in this dreadful calamity ; and the victors continued to mark their progress with fire and sword, till they had utterly destroyed the whole of the temple, except two gates and a part of the court which had been formerly appropriated to the use of the female worshippers.

Meanwhile Titus made great preparations for attacking the upper city, and on the eighth day of September the warlike engines played with such irresistible fury

upon the zealots, that the place was soon taken by assault. At this melancholy juncture the incendiaries who had involved their country in ruin, ran, like madmen, towards Shiloah, in the vain hope of breaking through the wall of circumvallation ; but they were vigorously repulsed by the Romans, and obliged to hide themselves in the common* sewers, while their unfortunate brethren were either cut to pieces or reserved to grace the victor's triumph.

A. D. When the dreadful work of massacre and
73. pillage was finished, Titus issued out orders for the entire demolition of the city, with all its edifices, towers, walls and fortifications, except a small part of the western wall and the towers of Phasaël, Hippicos, and Mariamne, which were prudently left to give an accurate idea to future generations, of the amazing strength of the city, and the great exertions of its conqueror.

Titus, having thus executed the vengeance of God upon this polluted capital, returned in triumph to Rome ; and the subsequent destruction of three fortresses, by Lucilius Bassus, terminated a war, in which one million four hundred and sixty two thousand Jews were either slain or taken prisoners. Of those who escaped assassination by submitting to the Romans, eleven thousand perished for want, either through their own despair, or the negligence of their keepers ; and ninety

* John and Simon, the two great leaders of the rebellion, were dragged from their hiding places, and sent, in chains, to Rome, where they received the due reward of their abominable crimes.

seven thousand were exposed to fight, like gladiators, in a public amphitheatre, or to be devoured by wild beasts.

Such was the awful catastrophe of a city and nation which had rendered themselves obnoxious to the wrath of heaven, by a long succession of crimes, and which, in the language of our Blessed Redeemer, had “disregarded the day of their visitation.”

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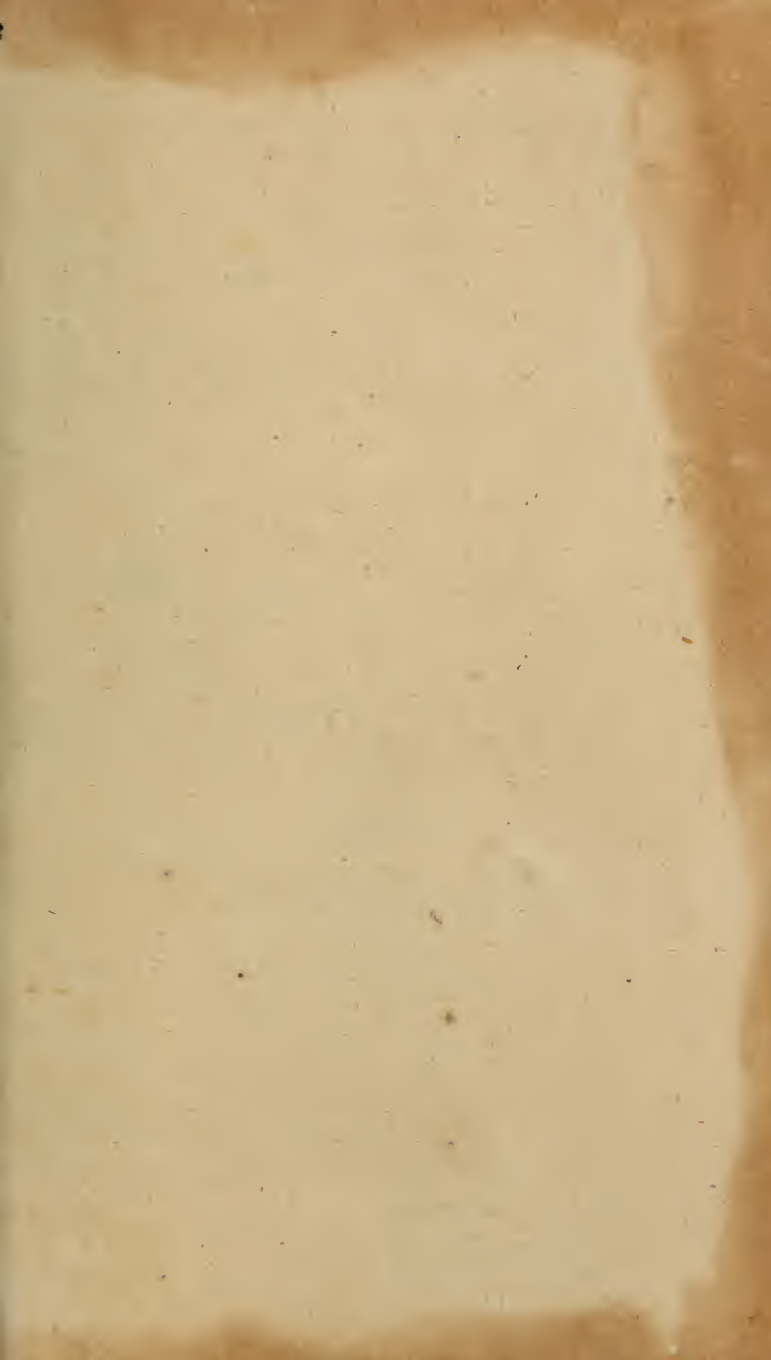
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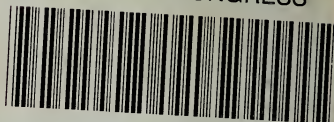
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